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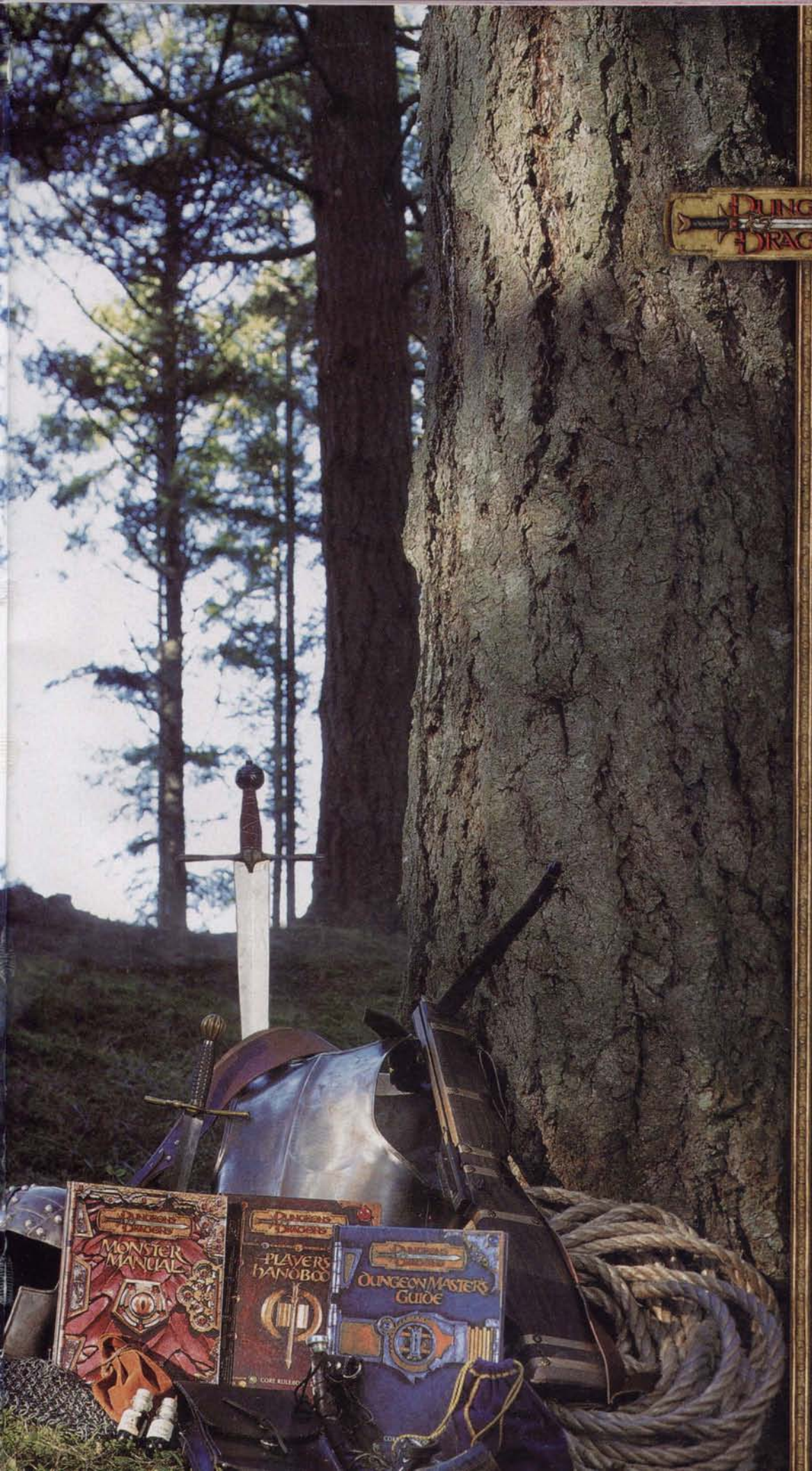

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20 **Up on a Soapbox**
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Responsible for much of the most memorable art of 3rd Edition, Todd Lockwood has redefined what dragons look like.

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'TIS THE SEASON . . .

From everyone here at *Dragon Magazine*, we wish you happy holidays and constant critical hits through the new year.

DECEMBER 18TH

The *Dragon* staff will close down opperations for nearly a day and even skip the scheduled D&D game because of the impending onset of the "Two Towers" virus. Work resumes as expected on the following day.

GLADIATORS

Dragon and *Dungeon* team up for the biggest crossover in recent years. Check out *Dragon* issue #303 and *Dungeon* issue #96 for the biggest gladitorial showdown the magazines have seen. The free posters in both issues work together to give an entire arena map at miniatures scale.

TWENTY-FOUR

If you like nail-biting suspense, you'll love television's newest hit *24* (starring Kiefer Sutherland) that premiered last fall. Now that the DVD of the first season is out and has made the rounds at the office, we're all hooked, and we spend our Wednesday mornings sipping caffeinated beverages and discussing this season's latest episode.

HARRY POTTERING

Since the latest Harry Potter film released on Thansgiving, Paizo staff members have seen the film approximately . . . once. Yeah, did I mention that we are currently protesting because the next book still hasn't released?

WYRM'S TURN
FROM THE EDITOR

No one hands me my guns and says run.
–James Coburn in *The Magnificent Seven*

I've mentioned before that combat is my favorite part of D&D, but the more I think about it, the more I realize that's a lie. What I really like, although they're far less common and far harder to pull off, are those moments before combat when the players and NPCs involved in the scene decide that violence must ensue. It's not an easy concept to define. It's the scene in the beginning of *Brotherhood of the Wolf,* just before Mani slides off his horse to fight the bandits. It's the scene near the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (the film) where Aragorn sees that Sting has turned blue and urges Frodo to run. It's pretty much any non-fight scene in a Bruce Lee movie.

I still like combat a lot; there's the problem-solving aspects of figuring out the best tactics, bits of roleplaying as the characters exchange wit or invectives with their antagonists, and of course, the cool monsters, but even better than those things are the rare occasions when the characters get a chance to stand in the moment of decision. Whether they're looking a potential antagonist in the eye, like nearly any meeting between Tony Soprano and Richie Aprile in *The Sopranos,* or miles away when they decide that a conflict must ensue, like when the hired guns in *The Magnificent Seven* decide to ride back into town to confront the bandits one last time, the players, faced with a moment of choice, get a chance to shape the direction of the campaign.

These moments come and go quickly, and even in the movies, where they have scripted lines and multiple takes to help the actors, there are plenty that come off as flat or cheesy, so it's no surprise that most situations like this pass a group by without being either noticed or noticeable. Even cheesy dialog can work in these scenes, and there are plenty of humorous action movies dedicated to just such dialog. These scenes, when they work, can make an entire campaign. They have such potential that when I'm DMing, I plan entire adventures around them.

In college I ran an adventure that ended in a standoff in a mountain pass between two groups of NPCs, one group represented the rightful government of the area, a local ruler who had the PCs in his employ. The other consisted of a group of good-hearted but disagreeable mercenaries protecting a group of nomads. In this scene, the players had to come to grips with their employer's selfishness, decide for themselves whether they would fight on one side or the other, attempt to end the dilemma without a fight, and so on. Starting with a desire to see the characters in this scene made writing the adventure around it easy.

I still build campaigns and adventures this way, and in the lunchtime gladiators game that I run here at the Paizo offices, each non-combat session is set up with a scene like this in mind. Sitting in their barracks one afternoon, the players learned that a group of allied gladiators was trapped in the arena by a superior number of warriors from a rival faction. Although it was a pretty sure bet that the PCs would run down the ramp wrestling-style to help their friends, they began the session in a moment of choice.

These scenes aren't easy to come by, so I'd like to hear what scenes players and DMs have played through that set the stage for a great confrontation, those scenes that represent a turning point in the characters' views, or those scenes that shaped a portion of the campaign. Join us on the message boards at **www.wizards.com**, and tell us about your character's great moments.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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The smell of sweat and sand made hot by the sun, the energizing tang of fear in your mouth, the roar of a crowd of thousands chanting your name, and the feeling that the hand that wraps around the hilt of your weapon grasps your chance at eternal glory: Get in the pit.

SAYING THE RIGHT THINGS
by Eric Cagle
Read this article and find out how to earn experience points without fighting. That's right, your character can gain levels without ever rolling initiative. With the definitive rules for Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive, your character will always know what to say, and you'll be ready for any social situation.

THE IRON PATH
by Dean Poiso
You don't need *Oriental Adventures* to develop exotic fighting styles, and this article brings cohesive themes to non-human fighting forms. From the dwarven axefury techniques to the halfling art of Hin Fist and gnoll yurr'grot styles, the most popular races in the D&D game get their own unique fighting arts.

CLASS ACTS: FEROCITY AND FINESSE
by Kolja Liquette
The pit is fame. The pit is fortune. The pit is life, and what it doesn't destroy, it perfects. These prestige classes, perfectly suited to the trials of the gladiatorial arena or the dangers of the dungeon represent the pinnacle of fighting expertise.

UNDERGROVES
by Tim Hitchcock
Forget the drow, forget the mindflayers, the greatest secrets of the Underdark lie in hidden wells of natural power called undergroves.

PSYCHIC BOXING
by E. W. Morton
The fighting styles of *Oriental Adventures* meet the mental prowess of the *Psionics Handbook* for the first time in print. Can you combine mental and physical discipline to travel the Path of One?

Inside you'll also find new fiction from T. H. Lain, "Guild Secrets," "Silicon Sorcery: Neverwinter Nights," and more advice, tools, and tactics to improve your game!

READERS TALK BACK
SCALE MAIL

Maturing Villainy

Issue #300 is beautiful, a nice piece for your milestone issue. Congratulations!

I've been reading *DRAGON* for over 15 years, and I feel that the magazine (much like the D&D game) is maturing and reaching an older audience that has grown with it, and the magazine has molded to meet their needs. On that note, I was truly pleased to see the inclusion of the "vile content" as well as articles on the maturity level of the game itself. It's one of the first times that I can recall the issue being addressed, and it is only appropriate for a game that belongs both to an older generation of gamers and a younger generation that is just beginning their journey. By presenting these ideas (succinctly and over a number of categories) and by including appropriately dastardly spells and prestige classes, I feel the game was elevated, and you all deserve a round of applause for pulling it off. I hope we can anticipate more in the future as you head toward issue #400 and beyond.

I assure you, I'll still be reading.

Scott Dillin
Carrboro, NC

Burning Bridges

Issue #300 was despicable. How can a group that has been fighting the label of Satan worshipers put this type of filth in the magazine that is supposed to be officially representing the game? We have fought for so long to be accepted into the general public, to get the parents of would-be players to accept D&D as a wholesome game. And you, the people who are supposed to be the leaders and representatives of the average D&D enthusiasts, rip down any shred of credibility that we have built. The vile content and graphic violence theme of the 300th issue demeaned the game, demeaned the magazine, and worst of all demeaned the gamers who play the game. From now on, the few non-gamers that read that issue will have a more negative view of what is my favorite pastime. I hope that many of us stand up and state our views on the 300th issue. I feel betrayed, and I feel as though I've had something taken away. This type of material is unacceptable, and if it continues, I will reconsider my standing as a subscriber.

Matthew M. Eyre
Brigham City, UT

More than 20 years have passed since D&D was first attacked by ignorance. Many people are still ignorant of D&D, and there is always the possibility that such people will use D&D as a scapegoat for social ills, but the danger of such ignorance is largely outweighed by the simple fact that millions of people have played D&D over more than 25 years. Schools might prohibit it, parents might fear it, and religious institutions might rail against it, but like comics, horror movies, rap music, punk rock, heavy metal music, and video games, D&D weathered the storm and is now an element of popular culture. It has appeared in good light on television shows such as The X-Files, The Simpsons, *and* Futurama; *in music in the songs of bands such as Weezer; in the comments of media stars like Vin Diesel and Conan O'Brien; in multiple D&D-related best-selling novels; and—most obviously—on the big screen. Of course, not all such representations are positive, but most show less derision and fear toward the D&D game and D&D players than the media shows to fans of polka music.*

That said, we have no plans to present vile content in future issues. DRAGON *articles might use rules from the* Book of Vile Darkness *in suitably dark articles or offer other supporting content when appropriate, just like* DRAGON *might occasionally run articles in support of the* Psionics Handbook, Oriental Adventures, *the* Stronghold Builder's Guidebook, *or the* Epic Level

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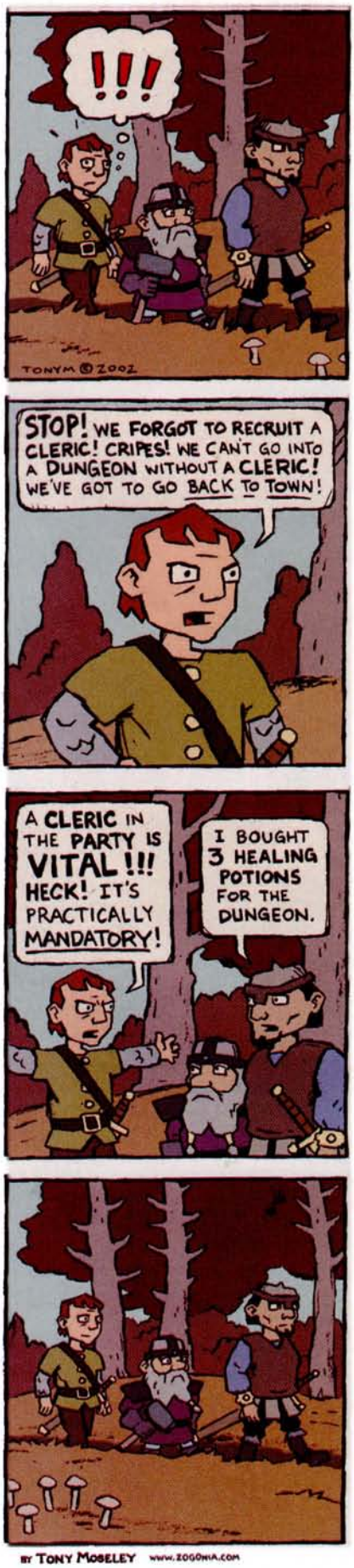
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Handbook. *Unless a large portion of the audience demands it, such as with the* FORGOTTEN REALMS *content in the magazine,* DRAGON *will continue to serve the vast majority of readers with new D&D content they can use with just the three core rulebooks.*

Matthew Sernett
Associate Editor

Matt outlines DRAGON*'s policy on mature content nicely, but I want to add a bit of personal perspective. Because I was lucky enough to playtest some of the material from the* Book of Vile Darkness, *I've seen it in play for nearly a year now, and I'm sure that it has changed the play experience in both campaigns that I play in and the lunchtime game that I run for the better. In these campaigns (all of which range from "standard" to "mature" games using* DRAGON *#300's rating system) the villains all seem a little more evil, a little more dangerous, and a little more interesting, all without making the game tasteless or making any of the players uncomfortable. There are three or four things from the "how vile" article that won't come up in any of those games, and that's by our choice. So at the level of a single person's campaigns, (granted, a person with a bias in favor of the books and articles), the book has added a great deal to the game.*

Jesse Decker
Editor-in-Chief

Toys for Tots?

I must start my letter by telling you, as you rightly deserve, how much I enjoy your magazine. As a younger player, I find it very useful. However, the reason I write to you is not to tell you how good your magazine is but to complain about the latest issue that reached my UK doorstep. I was especially looking forward to the sealed section in issue #300, and it was the first thing I looked at after receiving the magazine. I ripped through the brown paper envelope and through the plastic wrapper excitedly and then was slowed down by the strongly sealed pages that made me feel like there was something really gruesome and vile to read inside. I opened the sealed section, glanced through the spells, and skimmed through the prestige classes. I looked at the semi-gruesome pictures with mild satisfaction, but in reading the articles I found them not very repulsive at all. There was nothing that should be reserved for mature audiences, unless you mean seven-year-olds by "mature." It shouldn't have been used as an advertising gimmick. In the future, I would much prefer a poster or some other game addition in *DRAGON*. Just for reference, I'll buy the *Book of Vile Darkness* anyway.

Spike Grantham
Address withheld

Et Tu, *DRAGON*?

I was introduced to roleplaying by my husband several years ago. At the time, I was interested and had mostly forgotten about all of the dreadful press D&D had gotten in the '70s and '80s. I was impressed and have been enjoying your magazine as well as D&D for about six years now. When 3rd Edition came out, I was delighted to see that it was being marketed as a much more family-friendly game: The orange box set is available at Toys R Us, and there's a greater emphasis on heroic PCs among other things. I thought that perhaps gaming would be able to overcome its dreadful image problems of the past and become a hobby that I could write on a resume. Then I saw your October issue and read a little about the new *Book of Vile Darkness* that is coming out. I was dismayed by the turnaround. I feel betrayed by you and Wizards of the Coast. The push to make D&D a harmless and heroic gaming choice is apparently over. My husband and I have enjoyed reading you magazine for years and are now considering not renewing our subscription. We have small children in our home, and now I feel I must put your magazine under lock and key lest one of them accidentally read it.

I do not believe that vile content is a good marketing ploy. I know of only a minority of gamers who will buy this new book and find interest in the topics covered. I was personally offended by the offering of rape, slavery, and lewdness as topics to include in my game. I understand that one of the underlying fundamentals of this game is that it can be personalized to individual gaming tastes, and I am not writing this letter in a feeble attempt to control what some other

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Violence

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TRAPS AND TREASURES

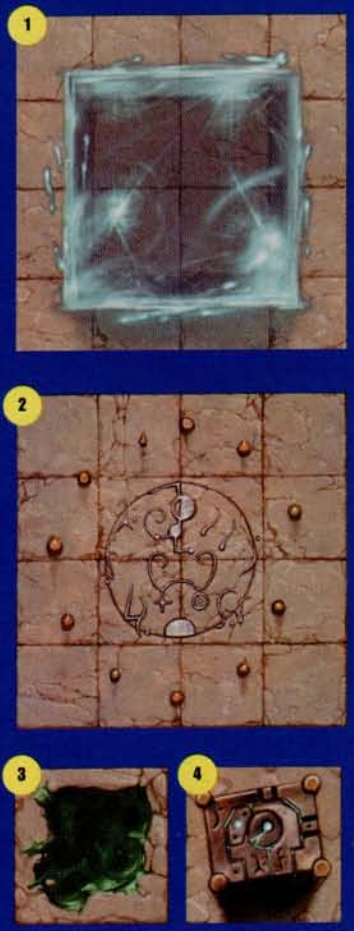
You can use the Traps and Treasures tokens in this issue in many different ways. Here are a few suggestions for some of the stranger looking tiles.

Cube of Force: This tile was intended to represent a cube of force, and it serves equally well for the item or the spell, but it could also be used to represent a gelatinous cube or the area of a *grease* spell.

Magic Circle: This tile can be used to represent a summoning diagram, a magic glyph, or a symbol riddle left by ancient powers.

Slime Square: The green area on this tile might be a patch of green slime, a green slime-coated pit, or a puddle of acid.

Magic Box: This tile could be a magically trapped chest, a special puzzle box, the coffin of a Small vampire, a rune-covered pillar, or a monolith.



gamers might want to include in their own game. However, I do believe that while some of these things might sell, I am not alone in my views, and this new focus will drive away numerous faithful roleplayers. If this is an example of what *Dragon* will be publishing under new ownership, expect a loss of readership. I will certainly be spending my money on more acceptable publications.

Rita Nauman
Mitchell, SD

I'm baffled by the readers who wrote in to express their outrage about the material in issue #300, as the content wasn't much viler than other recent issues. Personally, I thought two spell descriptions were gross, but I don't equate gross with offensive (and my players just might encounter a villain in the near future who uses one of these spells). The "How Far Should You Go" article was intended to be a helpful roleplaying article discussing how to determine what level of violence and vile content you should include in your game. With all the sex and violence made readily available to people by turning on the TV or surfing the Internet, I think the "How Far Should You Go" article was a necessary tool for responsible DMs whose gaming group consists of players of varying ages and tastes.

The villains in the game I run with all of my girlfriends are truly evil, despicable beings. Their level of evilness highlights the players' goodness, and it reinforces that they are fighting on the right side. What's wrong with playing a hero who fights really despicable villains? For that matter, what's wrong with playing a really despicable villain? Either way, D&D is just a game. After all, the last I checked, none of us believed we could cast fireball *at our enemies . . . right?*

Stacie Magelssen
Associate Editor

Love for the Dead

Congratulations on the trouble-free transition from Wizards of the Coast. I'm sure every subscriber was a bit worried for a while, but everything seems clear on the horizon now.

I was very pleased to read the mummy article. Again, you have read your readers' minds and delivered just what I was looking for. I was also very pleased to find that some research was done into mummies from around the world; namely, the frozen mummies of the Andes. Great article.

CAPTION CONTEST

What's so funny? Why, you are! So send your caption for this cartoon to **Caption/Dragon Magazine, 3245 146th PL SE Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007** by February 1st, and be sure to write "issue #302" somewhere on your entry. Your caption will undergo rigorous testing by the editors, and if it passes, it just might be printed in an upcoming issue. There's no need to cut up your magazine. If you want to include the drawing, send in a photocopy.

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TEEN T Violence Blood
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I just wanted to add a bit to the society notes. The Inca culture was one of those cultures that lacked fear of the dead. They had a special kind of mummy made of the leaders and kings, which were stored in a special building with windows facing the east. Those buildings were not sealed shut like the pyramids because the leaders were forever served, fed, and groomed by their servants and their servants' descendents. The mummies even kept all their belongings and property, and they were carried to the major cities for celebrations and special ceremonies. These mummies never left the lives of their people. They were not guardians; many servants and warriors guarded them. You just can't imagine all the places where those cavernous mausoleums were placed. Sometimes they were in the middle of a rocky mountain wall, a thousand feet high over a valley, with the stairs to them barely visible in the stone. The access to the stairs was always guarded, and there were guarding houses in the top of nearby hills. The article's suggestion that mummies might be ancestral advisors or keepers of ancient wisdom was a great idea well suited to these Incan mummies.

That would be a change—coming to a mummy's mausoleum to ask a question, not to just plunder and destroy.

Lastly, I was very concerned by the buzz about the vile content in issue #300. After reading some opinions on the matter, I opened the sealed pages to make my own judgment. Well . . . I think that some of the descriptions are just too much. Is there really a need to go that far?

Keep up the great work.

Francisco Alonzo
Lima, Perú

I'm glad you liked the mummy article, and your description of the Incan mummies gave me at least five adventure ideas. It took us quite a while to find an outline for the new "Ecology" articles that I liked, and with the help of writers who enjoy the series, the staff here at DRAGON *is still tuning up the general feel of the new articles. Be sure to let us know if there are ways we can improve the new version of the series.*

If you want to put the variant mummies and combat tactics presented in the "Ecology" article into play, check out "Swamp Stomp," a new adventure by Chuck Lukacs presented in DUNGEON *#93.*

Jesse Decker

Nostalgia with Teeth

Thanks for publishing the covers of your past 300 issues. Is there any chance you could rewind to issue #50 and start over again? The cover art was beautiful. I noticed this as a teenager, and I keep with the conviction now: Even outside of the gaming world, you had a very beautiful magazine. Granted, although the high, small title and subheads were probably only there to make the magazine stand above all the other magazines it regularly got shelved behind, this incidentally gave the cover art room to breathe and be stunning. Something I believe only the *New Yorker* continues to do.

But now? Yuck! No offense, but do you actually lay your covers out or simply vomit titles on the page and then clear away the center? The artwork is pretty uninspiring too. Video game, comic book, acid reflux, blech. On the magazine rack it almost camouflages *DRAGON* against all the other magazines it sits with. What's next? Bind it in an elven cloak? Maybe *DRAGON* can never go back to pictures of quaint country maidens knitting quilts that birth monsters or old men in knickers contemplating a globe of an ancient world, but egads! If you're going to be a slave to fashion, serve with some dignity.

Once again, thanks for the pictorial. It reminded me that as a teenager in the '80s, I was definitely gaming at the right time, and we really did have something special. The proof is in print.

JD McDonnell
Address witheld

No offense taken, but you will never see another quaint country maiden knitting or old man in knickers on the cover of DRAGON Magazine *ever again.*

Matthew Sernett

CAPTION CONTEST WINNER

Winner

I just ask myself what's more frightening: getting caught by the cultists and gutted like a fish or going home to my wife without an anniversary present.

Congratulations Eric O'keefe!
Hull, MA

Nostalgia Pick

It's been 25 years Rexx . . . I don't think the gem is coming out.

Rodney Hart
Orangevale, CA

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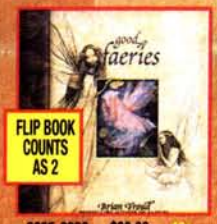

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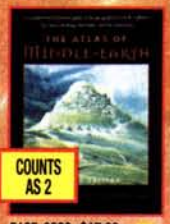

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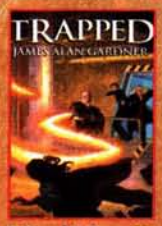

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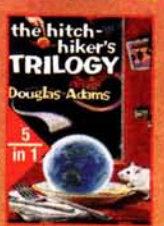

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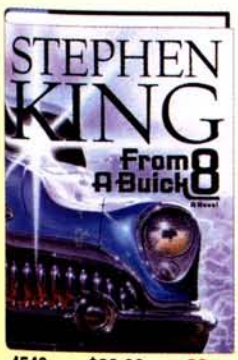

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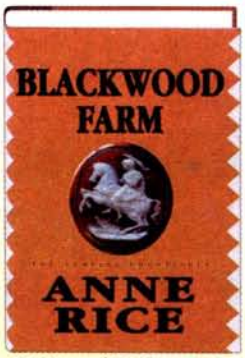

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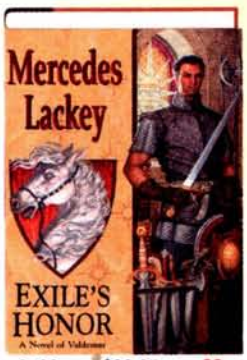

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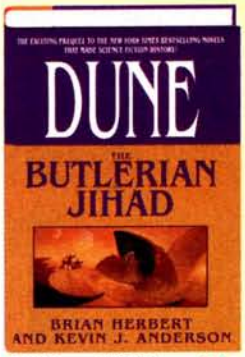

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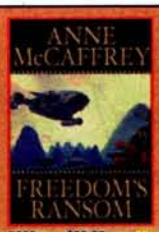

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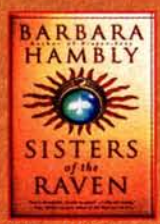

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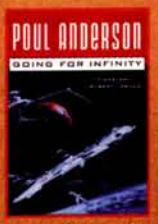

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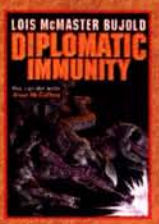

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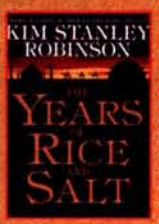

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DUNGEON #96

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS
by Frank Brunner
Some fell force is slaying the gladiators of the Nyos Arena. The PCs must sign up as new gladiatorial combatants to find out who or what is behind these disturbing deaths. A D&D adventure for four 5th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-9. This adventure uses rules from *Dragon* #303's "Campaign Components: Gladiators" article and can be used as support for a new gladiatorial campaign or be simply inserted into your existing game.

BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON
by Caine Chandler
The village of Rutherton was long besieged by the denizens of the nearby mountains until a powerful cleric of Pelor gave them the Light of Reason, a holy artifact designed to protect the area from evil. When the flame of the Light is snuffed in a violent storm, and a massive threat lurks in the mountains nearby, the PCs must follow the trail of the now-dead cleric in the hope of rekindling the powerful Light of Reason. A D&D adventure for four 13th-level PCs but scalable for levels 9-15.

DEMONBLADE
by Hank Woon
A vain and greedy prince is willing to sacrifice his kingdom for the power of the Demonblade. But when he finally gets his hands on the weapon, he discovers too late that the blade is much more than he bargained for. Is the price of a soul a fair trade for immortality if your essence is subsumed by evil? A D&D adventure for four 16th-level PCs but scalable for levels 14-20.

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Plus "PX Poker Night," the first *Delta Green* d20 adventure ever published, d20 industry news, RPGA updates, and more!

UP ON A SOAPBOX

All I Need to Know I Learned from D&D

Penny for Your Thoughts

by Gary Gygax

Say that to Scrooge McDuck (one of my heroes, of course), and he'd leap at the opportunity. This brings us to the question, is it possible to give too much treasure? Of course, but not if it is done properly. Only the redoubtable miser with his money bin of three-cubic-acre extent would be able to manage some hoards. This I discovered rather by accident when detailing the encounter areas of the very first level of the original Castle Greyhawk dungeon.

What looks like a lot isn't always so much at all. When the intrepid player characters of son Ernie and daughter Elise discovered and defeated a den of kobolds, their ensuing search revealed a great iron chest. This container was filled with thousands of copper coins! *Ah-ha,* they thought. *Even at the exchange rate for gold we have come upon considerable wealth.* Right . . . and wrong! Of course the heavy strongbox filled with coppers was more than two characters could manage. After much debate, they loaded up as much as they could carry, left the dungeons for town to change their money into higher value coins, and then returned to the dungeon's first level for more loot. Imagine the consternation several game hours later when the adventurers discovered that in their absence others had come and removed the remaining treasure.

Not only did I then have the enjoyment of a "floating treasure chest" as one after another dungeon dweller carried it off to their lair to be discovered yet again, but the idea of vast heaps of near-impossible-to-successfully-gain treasure solidified in my mind and became a useful tool in creating interesting adventure possibilities. In deeper levels of the dungeon, the coins became successively silver, electrum, and eventually gold. Even in those days when the amount of wealth carried out meant earned experience, such heaps of currency were actually pretty valueless. Enchanted bags with extraordinary carrying capacity were eventually available, but by then the amount of experience needed to gain a level made even as much as 20,000 additional experience points relatively small potatoes when divided among the players.

The initial reaction by the players to heaps of low-value coinage was to hire mercenaries. They recruited orcs as mercenaries, paying them off with part of what these servants carted out of the dungeon. Of course, this changed the manner of play, incited greed and covetousness, and generally made my life as a DM more interesting. When piles of gold coins were concerned, the lengths the players would go to make sure their PCs got the lot were usually astonishing, often amusing, and sometimes the cause of great consternation to the characters as monsters reacted to what was going on. Dragon hoards were the utmost in this category of trick. Of course, the mountain of coins would have gold intermixed with silver, electrum, platinum, and copper too. After a mighty combat had ensued, the time spent in the place assessing what was gained, searching through coinage, and figuring out how to remove as much as possible offered many opportunities for new opponents to come on the scene.

Thus it went for quite a while, but eventually the leading players recognized the ploy, made one sweep, took the most valuable treasure, and left the rest for who or whatever might care to cart it off. So in the main, that ended the real fun to be had with what seemed like too much treasure. The players discovered it was.

There is also a moral to this little tale. Unlike monkeys, players eventually learn to let go of the seemingly valuable prize in hand, for continuing to hold onto it means they are a prize to some waiting captor. D

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PHIL FOGLIO'S WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL & DIXIE

HEY, KIDS! TODAY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MAGIC. THE THING THAT DIFFERENTIATES D&D FROM REGULAR WARGAMING.
THAT AND D&D ACKNOWLEDGES THE EXISTENCE OF WOMEN.
THAT IS SO TRUE! I ALWAYS WANTED TO RUN A BAND OF AMAZONS AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO AND NO ONE WOULD LET ME!!
...RIGHT. ANYWAY, THERE ARE FIVE TYPES OF MAGIC-
I ASSUME ONE OF THEM IS MAGIC, THE GATHERING, WHICH IS THIS AMAZING CARD GAME WHERE YOU PLAY DUELING WIZARDS WHO-
AH!
NOPE. NEVER HEARD OF IT.
FIRST THERE'S STAGE MAGIC. THIS IS REALLY JUST ILLUSION AND MISDIRECTION, BUT IT CAN STILL BE VERY POWERFUL.
HEY HEY HEY! FIND THE QUEEN!
UM...
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THEN THERE'S WILD MAGIC. THIS IS MAGIC THAT JUST EXISTS. IT MAKES POSSIBLE THOSE RARE AND MAGICAL CREATURES LIKE: ELVES, DRAGONS, AND SOMEONE WHO ACTUALLY WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER
A PALADIN? REALLY?
THEN THERE'S HUMAN-INFLUENCED MAGIC. THIS BREAKS DOWN INTO WHITE MAGIC-
WE MUST WORK WITH NATURE TO BRING ABOUT PEACE AND LOVE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING AND SHARING AND SINGING HAPPY SONGS LIKE-
ALL RIGHT! ENOUGH!! I SURRENDER ALREADY!
-AND BLACK MAGIC.
WE MUST CONQUOR AND CONTROL NATURE AND USE IT TO BRING THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH UNDER OUR CONTROL AS OUR ZOMBIE SLAVES AND RULE FOREVER!
ALL RIGHT! ENOUGH!! I'LL VOTE REPUBLICAN ALREADY!
AND THEN, THERE'S THE MOST POWERFUL OF ALL - THE MAGIC OF HOLLYWOOD!
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The Summoner's Circle

Expanded Rules for Summoning Animals & Outsiders

by Charles Dunwoody
illustrated by Todd Lockwood and David Wahlstrom

New monsters are one of the coolest elements of the ever-expanding Dungeons & Dragons game, and while monsters are typically the province of the DM, the players should have some of the fun too. Although the *summon monster* spells in the *Player's Handbook* allow for diverse and interesting creatures to be summoned, there is room to allow players access to more monsters, especially those from supplements released after the *Monster Manual*. This article introduces variant summoning rules, including a straightforward formula for summoning monsters based on a creature's CR. Perhaps the most compelling option available to those players and DMs interested in using the expanded summoning lists involves personalizing each spellcaster's summon list, so although two spellcasters summon creatures of equal power with *summon monster II*, they each have a different list of potential allies.

Alternate Summon Spells

To use the variant summon rules, choose an elemental or outsider with a Challenge Rating listed on the Summon Table above. The Summon Monster Table and the Summon Nature's Ally Table below list creatures of the appropriate CR.

Summon Table

Level	CR
1	Less than 1
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4-5
6	6-7
7	8-9
8	10-11
9	12-13

You can also summon creatures using the templates for celestial, elemental, fiendish, half-celestial, half-elemental, half-fiend, shade, shadow, and wood (if wood is an element in the campaign) creatures. Summoning multiple creatures with the alternate *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spells works normally. That is, a spellcaster can summon 1d3 creatures from the list of the spell one level lower than the one she is casting or 1d4+1 monsters from the list of a spell two or more levels lower than the one she is casting.

Recommended Variant: Players and DMs who feel that the ability to summon any monster of a certain CR makes each *summon monster* spell too versatile (and therefore too powerful) can easily restrict the number of monsters on each spellcaster's list. Assume that every spellcaster begins with a list of three creatures of the appropriate CR when they first learn a *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally* spell. If a spellcaster wants to learn to summon a creature not on his initial list of three, he must research the correct formulae. The research requires one full day of study and two skill checks. Arcane spellcasters attempting to expand their *summon monster* list must make a Knowledge (the planes)

check and a Knowledge (arcana) check (both DC 15 + the monster's CR). Divine spellcasters attempting to expand their *summon monster* list must make a similar set of skill checks, using Knowledge (religion) in place of Knowledge (arcana). Any spellcaster attempting to expand his *summon nature's ally* list must also make a similar set of skill checks, using Knowledge (nature) in place of Knowledge (arcana). The spellcaster adds the desired creature to his list only if both skill checks are successful. If either check is failed, the caster may make another attempt, but each additional attempt takes a full day. A spellcaster can add only a small number of creatures to each summon spell list. The total number of creatures a spellcaster can have on any one summon spell list equals 3 + the appropriate spellcasting ability score bonus. For example, a wizard with a 14 Intelligence can have up to 5 monsters on each summon spell list.

If you'd like to add even more flavor or DM control to the process of expanding the *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* spell lists, you can require a spellcaster who wishes to expand her summoning lists to first find an existing source of the new summoning formulae much like finding a copy of an existing spell and copying it into a spellbook. With this permutation of the idea, spellcasters might become known for summoning a particular kind of monster, and other spellcasters might seek them out to exchange or steal the summoning formulae.

Summon Tables

The lists below are meant to be samples of the monsters available with each spell and are by no means exhaustive. Players are encouraged to take a look at creatures with one or more templates, and creatures from other d20 products.

Caution: Some monsters, despite their CR, are not suitable for summoning or need to be summoned at a higher level. When adding a monster to the summon list of any spell, whether it's for a PC or NPC, the DM should compare the monster to other monsters of a similar CR to look for overpowered monsters. The two best warning signs are unusually high Hit Dice compared to other monsters of the creature's CR or spellcasting abilities. Allowing a spellcaster to summon creatures with spellcasting abilities and spell-like abilities that let the creature cast spells of a higher level than the summoner is the easiest way for a summon spell to become unbalanced. No summon spell should let a character summon a creature that can cast multiple spells unless the highest spell is at least one level below the level of the summon spell. In most cases, such spellcasting abilities should be limited to spells two or three levels below the summon spell required to summon the creature. For example, on the charts below, elementals and paraelementals have all been moved "up" one spell level because of their relatively high Hit Dice and damage reduction when compared to other monsters of their CR.

Templates

The summon lists in this article do not include creatures with templates, but as the *Player's Handbook* demonstrates, templates offer a way to summon nearly any creature. If the template has a connection to another plane (such as celestial, fiendish, or the elemental templates from the *Manual of the Planes*), compare the creature's adjusted CR to the CR range for the appropriate spell.

Spell Types

Summon spells have spell types such as good, chaotic, or fire based on the specific creature summoned. However, there are several logical ways to determine the spell's type. The *Player's Handbook* suggests two such ways: one involves changing the spell's type only when the summoned creature has the matching subtype (so a spell used to summon an earth elemental counts as an earth spell, but summoning a celestial lion counts as casting a spell with no type), the other involves assigning an alignment to the creature and using that (so a spell used to summon an earth elemental counts as an untyped spell, and summoning a celestial lion counts as casting a lawful and good spell).

Another way to determine the spell's type includes combining the two methods in the way that seems most logical to your DM (so a spell used to summon an earth elemental counts as an earth spell, and summoning a celestial lion counts as casting a good spell). If you use the custom summon spell lists variant described above, it makes a great deal of sense to allow an equal number of creatures of each alignment or type at each spell level. (For example, the *summon monster II* list in your campaign might include three good creatures, three evil creatures, and one elemental with each elemental type.)

The following *summon monster* and *summon nature's ally* tables list monster name, CR, and sourcebook. The book titles are abbreviated as follows: MM=*Monster Manual,* MoF=*Monsters of Faerûn,* MoP=*Manual of the Planes,* MM2=*Monster Manual 2.* Permission granted to photocopy the following two pages for personal use.

Summon Monster I

Name	CR	Book
Bariaur	1/2	MoP
Formian, worker	1/2	MM
Planetouched, aasimar	1/2	MM
Planetouched, genasi	1/2	MoF
Planetouched, tiefling	1/2	MM

Summon Monster II

Name	CR	Book
Bladeling	1	MM2
Devil, lemure	1	MM
Ether scarab	1	MM2
Githyanki	1	MoP
Githzerai	1	MoP
Planetouched, chaond	1	MM2
Planetouched, zenythri	1	MM2

Summon Monster III

Name	CR	Book
Azer	2	MM
Celestial, lantern archon	2	MM
Demon, abyssal maw	2	MM2
Demon, abyssal skulker	2	MM2
Demon, dretch	2	MM
Elemental, Small	1	MM
Devil, imp	2	MM
Paraelemental, Small	1	MoP
Planetouched, fey'ri	2	MoF
Planetouched, tanarukk	2	MoF
Salamander, Small	2	MM
Stone spike	2	MM2
Thoqqua	2	MM
Vargouille	2	MM

Summon Monster IV

Name	CR	Book
Arrowhawk, Small	3	MM
Celestial, cervidal	3	MM2
Demon, abyssal ravager	3	MM2
Demon, quasit	3	MM
Devil, advespa	3	MM2
Ephemera, dusk beast	3	MoP
Fire bat	3	MM2
Formian, warrior	3	MM
Hell hound	3	MM
Howler	3	MM
Ice serpent	3	MoF
Magmin	3	MM
Tojanida, Small	3	MM
Xorn, Small	3	MM
Yeth hound	3	MoF

Summon Monster V

Name	CR	Book
Abishai, black	5	MoF
Abishai, white	5	MoF
Achaierai	5	MM
Arrowhawk, Medium-size	5	MM
Barghest, greater	5	MM
Celestial, hound archon	4	MM
Celestial, lupinal	5	MM2
Demon, jovoc	5	MM2
Demon, yochlol	5	MoF
Devil, spinagon	4	MoP
Elemental, Medium-size	3	MM
Energon, xag-ya	4	MoP
Energon, xeg-yi	5	MoP
Genie, djinni	5	MM
Genie, janni	4	MM
Half-fiend, draegloth	5	MoF
Half-fiend, durzagon	5	MM2
Marrash	5	MM2
Mercane	5	MoP
Myrlochar	4	MoF
Nightmare	5	MM
Paraelemental, Medium-size	5	MoP
Rast	5	MM
Ravid	5	MM
Salamander, Medium-size	5	MM
Shadow mastiff	5	MM
Sylph	5	MM2
Tojanida, Medium-size	5	MM
Triton	4	MM

Summon Monster VI

Name	CR	Book
Abishai, blue	7	MoF
Abishai, green	6	MoF
Belker	6	MM
Breathdrinker	7	MM2
Chaos beast	7	MM
Demon, armanite	7	MoP
Demon, uridezu	6	MoP
Devil, amnizu	7	MM2
Devil, barbazu	7	MM
Devil, erinyes	7	MM
Devil, hellcat	7	MM
Devil, kyton	6	MM
Devil, osyluth	6	MM
Elemental, Large	5	MM
Formian, taskmaster	7	MM
Genie, dao	7	MoP
Invisible stalker	7	MM
Lillend	7	MM
Nishruu	6	MoF
Paraelemental, Large	5	MoP
Slaad, red	7	MM
Xill	6	MM
Xorn, Medium-size	6	MM
Yugoloth, canoloth	6	MoP
Yugoloth, mezzoloth	7	MoP

Summon Monster VII

Name	CR	Book
Abishai, red	8	MoF
Arrowhawk, Large	8	MM
Celestial, avoral	9	MM
Demon, bebilith	9	MM
Demon, palrethee	8	MM2
Demon, succubus	9	MM
Demon, zovvut	9	MM2
Devil, hamatula	8	MM
Devil, malebranche	9	MM2
Devil, narzugon	9	MM
Dune stalker	9	MM2
Elemental, Huge	7	MM
Ephemera, ecalypse	9	MoP
Galeb duhr	9	MM2
Genie, efreeti	8	MM
Genie, marid	9	MoP
Glimmerskin	8	MM2
Immoth	9	MM2
Night hag	9	MM
Paraelemental, Huge	7	MoP
Rakshasa	9	MM
Salamander, Large	9	MM
Slaad, blue	8	MM
Slaad, green	9	MM
Tojanida, Large	9	MM
Vaporighu	9	MM2
Xorn, Large	8	MM

Summon Monster VIII

Name	CR	Book
Celestial, firre	10	MoP
Couatl	10	MM
Devil, cornugon	10	MM
Elemental, greater	9	MM
Formian, myrmarch	10	MM
Paraelemental, greater	9	MoP
Slaad, gray	10	MM
Yugoloth, marraenoloth	10	MM2
Yugoloth, yagnoloth	10	MM2

Summon Monster IX

Name	CR	Book
Celestial, ghaele	13	MM
Celestial, leonal	12	MoP
Demon, jarilith	13	MM2
Demon, ghour	12	MoF
Demon, goristro	13	MoP
Demon, vrock	13	MM
Devil, gelugon	13	MM
Elemental, elder	11	MM
Ethereal slayer	12	MM2
Paraelemental, elder	11	MoP
Slaad, death	13	MM
Yugoloth, nycaloth	13	MoP

Summon Nature's Ally I

Name	CR	Book
Baboon	1/2	MM
Badger	1/2	MM
Dire rat	1/3	MM
Dog	1/3	MM
Eagle	1/2	MM
Jermalaine	1/2	MM2
Porpoise	1/2	MM
Stirge	1/2	MM
Twig blight	1/3	MM2
Viper, Small snake	1/2	MM

Summon Nature's Ally II

Name	CR	Book
Camel	1	MM
Dryad	1	MM
Fungus, shrieker	1	MM
Heavy horse	1	MM
Hybsil	1	MoF
Krenshar	1	MM
Light war horse	1	MM
Octopus	1	MM
Riding dog	1	MM
Shark, Medium-size	1	MM
Sprite, nixie	1	MM
Sprite, grig	1	MM
Squid	1	MM
Viper, Medium-size	1	MM
Wolf	1	MM

Summon Nature's Ally III

Name	CR	Book
Ape	2	MM
Azer	2	MM
Bison	2	MM
Black bear	2	MM
Boar	2	MM
Cheetah	2	MM
Constrictor snake	2	MM
Crocodile	2	MM
Dire badger	2	MM
Dire bat	2	MM
Dire weasel	2	MM
Elemental, Small	1	MM
Giant lizard	2	MM
Heavy war horse	2	MM
Leopard	2	MM
Paraelemental, Small	1	MoP
Salamander, Small	2	MM
Satyr	2	MM
Shark, Large	2	MM
Thoqqua	2	MM
Worg	2	MM
Viper, Large	2	MM
Wolverine	2	MM

Summon Nature's Ally IV

Name	CR	Book
Ankheg	3	MM
Arrowhawk, Small	3	MM
Centaur	3	MM
Dinosaur, cryptoclidus	3	MM2
Dinosaur, deinonychus	3	MM
Dire ape	3	MM
Dire toad	3	MM2
Dire wolf	3	MM
Giant eagle	3	MM
Giant owl	3	MM
Viper, Huge	3	MM
Ice serpent	3	MoF
Lion	3	MM
Magmin	3	MM
Mephit	3	MM
Pegasus	3	MM
Plant, violet fungus	3	MM
Tojanida, Small	3	MM
Unicorn	3	MM
Unicorn, black	3	MoF
Xorn, Small	3	MM

Summon Nature's Ally V

Name	CR	Book
Alaghi	4	MoF
Arrowhawk, Med.-size	5	MM
Baleen whale	5	MM
Brown bear	4	MM
Dire boar	4	MM
Dire lion	5	MM
Dire snake	5	MM2
Dire wolverine	4	MM
Displacer beast	4	MM
Elemental, Med.-size	3	MM
Genie, djinni	5	MM
Genie, janni	4	MM
Giant constrictor snake	5	MM
Giant crocodile	4	MM
Girallon	5	MM
Green warder	4	MoF
Shark, Huge	4	MM
Orca whale	5	MM
Owlbear	4	MM
Paraelemental, Med.-size	3	MoP
Peryton	5	MoF
Polar bear	4	MM
Rast	5	MM
Rhinoceros	4	MM
Salamander, Med.-size	5	MM
Satyr with pipes	4	MM
Sirine	5	MM2
Sprite, pixie	4	MM
Tiger	4	MM
Tojanida, Medium-size	5	MM
Triton	4	MM

Summon Nature's Ally VI

Name	CR	Book
Belker	6	MM
Dark tree	7	MoF
Cachalot whale	6	MM
Dinosaur, allosaurus	7	MM2
Dinosaur, megaraptor	6	MM
Dinosaur, triceratops	7	MM
Dire bear	7	MM
Dire elk	7	MM2
Elemental, Large	5	MM
Legendary ape	7	MM2
Legendary eagle	6	MM2
Legendary wolf	7	MM2
Genie, dao	7	MoP
Paraelemental, Large	5	MoF
Nymph	6	MM
Shambling mound	6	MM
Tendriculos	6	MM
Xorn, Medium-size	6	MM

Summon Nature's Ally VII

Name	CR	Book
Arrowhawk, Large	8	MM
Dinosaur, tyrannosaurus	8	MM
Dinosaur, quetzalcoatlus	8	MM2
Dire shark	9	MM
Dire tiger	8	MM
Elemental, Huge	7	MM
Elephant	8	MM
Genie, efreeti	8	MM
Genie, marid	9	MoP
Giant squid	9	MM
Legendary bear	9	MM2
Paraelemental, Huge	7	MoP
Salamander, Large	9	MM
Tojanida, Large	9	MM
Treant	8	MM
Xorn, Large	8	MM

Summon Nature's Ally VIII

Name	CR	Book
Couatl	10	MM
Dire elephant	10	MM2
Elemental, greater	9	MM
Legendary shark	10	MM2
Legendary tiger	10	MM2
Paraelemental, greater	9	MoP

Summon Nature's Ally IX

Name	CR	
Dinosaur, seismosaurus	12	MM2
Dinosaur, spinosaurus	13	MM2
Elemental, elder	11	MM
Grizzly mastodon	13	MM2
Paraelemental, elder	11	MoP
Red sundew	13	MM2

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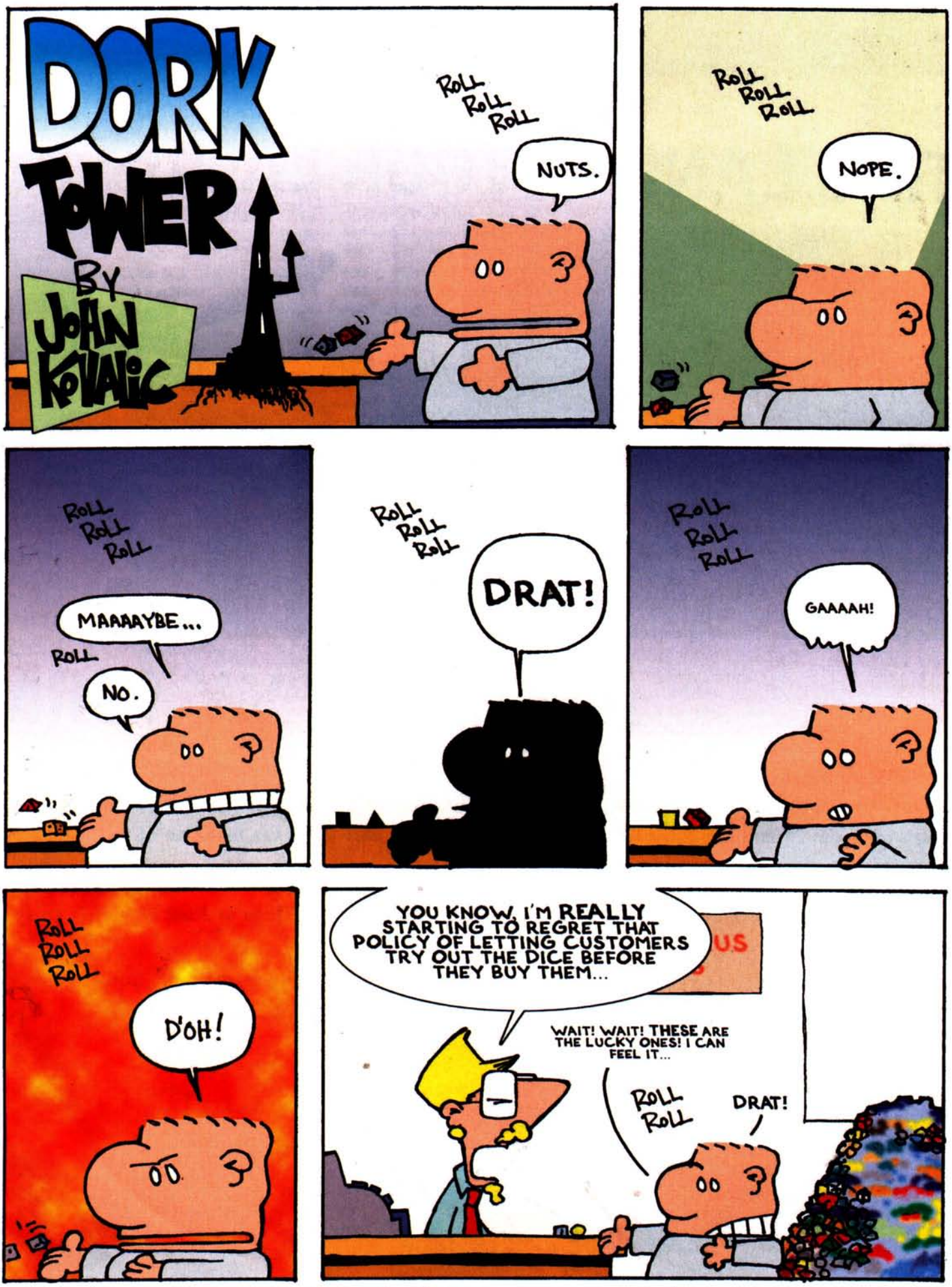

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THE TAINTED

by Chris Tanner · illustrated by Brom and Kyle Anderson

Brutal monsters and evil villains stalk heroes at every turn, but if their claws, weapons, or spells fail to slay their enemies, some evil creatures employ a more subtle method—insidious temptation. Any hero can thus find himself traveling down a dark road—the first few steps always seem to make so much sense—but once the journey is begun, it can end only in death or damnation. Still, a valiant few who walk dark paths fight against the loss of their souls and virtue, and some manage to maintain a kind of balance, wrestling with temptation with each breath and even in their dreams.

A tainted is a once noble hero who has fallen under the sway of a fiendish parasite. The demon, devil, or yugoloth slowly tries to control the character's will, offering him vile powers in dark whispers. How a person becomes tainted varies greatly. Some are possessed, others are tricked, and still others willingly allow a fiend to share their soul, hoping to gain power in exchange. Once a person is tainted, a heart black as night, a will of unyielding evil, and a potency of unwholesome origin can often be concealed, but the eyes of the fiend cannot. The "eyes of the fiend" are the telltale sign of a tainted creature, a pair of strange eye-shaped markings that burn themselves into the character's chest.

Depending on the particular variety of fiend that inhabits his soul, the tainted takes on elements of its personality. Generally, demons cause the tainted to be prone to violence. Specifically, a succubus-possessed tainted might become lecherous and seductive. Bebilith-possessed might have an obsession with spiders. Vrock-possessed tainted take on the scavenging qualities of vultures, and tainted bonded with hezrou often lose all desire for good hygiene. Glabrezu-possessed become sneaky and silver-tongued. Nalfeshnee-possessed tainted are judgemental, prejudiced bigots.

Marilith-possessed become covetous, particularly with jewels and other trinkets. Those unfortunate enough to have a balor inside them become instigators of the worst sort, sparking riots and violence.

Devils add to a character's desire for power and control, no matter what the cost. Osyluths make the tainted "snitch" more, blaming things on innocents. Kyton-tainted develop a disturbing obsession with sadistic torture. Tainted possessed by hellcats are prone to run on all fours and make bestial noises. Barbazu-tainted become aggressive and confrontational. Erinyes affect the tainted's personality much like a succubus. Hamatula-tainted become paranoid and distrusting. A tainted with a cornugon within his soul is often brave to foolish proportions. The gelugons are known for their elitist attitudes, and the tainted's personality changes to reflect this. A tainted dominated by a pit fiend develops a wicked pyromania and a fiendish cunning.

Yugoloths cause the tainted they possess to become greedy, selfish, and callous. Canoloth-tainted become overly stubborn Mezzoloths use the tainted's body to continue their martial training. Nycaloth-tainted become sneakier, using attacks from the shadows and other underhanded tactics. Ultroloth-tainted are scheming and cruel, and they tend to taunt victims before delivering the final blow.

If the tainted individual resists the advances of the fiend, he can use the powers without risk. He cannot, however, prevent the physical changes taking place in his body due to the activity of the fiend. Should the fiend's wiles pervert the character's mind far enough, he might become lost forever, trapped in the abyss of his mind, sealed in the shell of his body. Those who wish to rid themselves of the invading fiend must seek a way to banish it, but most tainted, even those who master the fiend within, fear the loss of the fiend's power.

A fiend usually prefers to take the noblest souls, so paladins and other good characters are at prime risk. There's nothing fiends crave more than to watch a pure heart melt away to be replaced with one as black as night. Fiends seem to take pleasure in polluting the most trusted and well-loved individuals. No one suspects these individuals of corruption, and their betrayals are the sweeter for it.

The tainted prestige class presents two paths of advancement, one for the spellcaster and one for the melee-oriented character. A character who wishes to become a tainted can choose from either prestige class path, but once a path is chosen, the character cannot then progress on the other. Both paths have the same class requirements, class skills, skill points per level, and abilities, but they differ as described below.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the tainted prestige class. In addition, some class features of the core classes are changed when a member of that class becomes a tainted.

Spellcasters: No matter what their alignment, tainted spellcasters cannot cast spells with the Good descriptor. Good-aligned tainted spellcasters have the option of casting Evil spells appropriate to their class, but each casting of such a spell causes the tainted to gain a fiend point (see below).

Cleric: Clerics who used positive energy to turn undead and spontaneously cast cure spells now have the option of using negative energy to rebuke undead and spontaneously cast inflict spells. They can choose to use this power at any time—it is not a permanent choice—but each use of negative energy in this fashion causes the tainted cleric to gain a fiend point. Clerics who already used negative energy suffer no penalty for doing so, but they gain no new ability. Clerics do not increase their turning ability when they take levels of the tainted prestige class.

TAINTED CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a tainted, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any nonevil.

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Base Will Save: +1.

Special: The character must share his soul with the personality of a particular fiend. This fiend might or might not have knowledge of the character's actions depending on how the character became a tainted. See the For Your Campaign, For Your Character, and How Does Your Character Become Tainted? sidebars in this article for suggestions about how to handle fiendish possession and tainted characters.

TAINTED CLASS SKILLS

The tainted's class skills (and the key ability modifier for each skill) are:

Str: Climb, Jump.

Dex: Hide, Move Silently, Ride.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (the planes), Search, Spellcraft.

Wis: Listen, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Disguise, Intimidate.

Tainted Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Tainted Warrior Hit Die: d10

Tainted Spellcaster Hit Die: d6

TAINTED WARRIOR ADVANCEMENT

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Fiend points, eyes of the fiend
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Fiendish power I, dream haunting
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Minor physical change
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Fiendish power II
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Hallucinations
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	Moderate physical change
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Fiendish power III
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Telepathy, craving
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	Major physical change
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Fiendish power IV

Paladin: Tainted paladins have the option of using their *lay on hands* ability to cause damage like an inflict spell. Each use of *lay on hands* in this fashion causes the tainted paladin to gain a fiend point. In addition, a tainted paladin can cast *contagion* in exchange for a use of his *remove disease* ability. Each casting of *contagion* causes the paladin to gain a fiend point.

Fiend Points: A tainted is a character struggling to maintain ownership of his soul. Fiend points represent how much control the fiend has over the tainted's soul. At 1st level, the tainted has 5 fiend points modified by an amount according to the table below.

Condition	Fiend Points
Alignment is good	-1
Alignment is neutral	+1
Alignment is good but has committed an act of evil in the past	+1
Character is a paladin	-1

When a character gains a tainted class level beyond the first or uses a fiendish power, he must make a fiend points check. If a fiendish power is continuous or can be used an unlimited number of times per day (such as a feat or a fly speed), the tainted must make the check at the start of each day (one check must be made for each continuous fiendish power). A fiend points check is a Wisdom check with a DC equal to the number of fiend points the character has. If the check succeeds, the tainted has fought off the fiend's temptations for the time being. If the check fails, the character gains a fiend point. On a roll of a natural 1, the tainted automatically fails and gains 1d4 fiend points. If the roll is a natural 20, the fiend's grip on the tainted's soul falters, and the character loses 1 fiend point. Fiend points cannot drop below 0. Willingly taking an evil action causes a character to automatically gain 1 fiend point. If at any time the number of the tainted's fiend points is equal to twice the tainted's Wisdom score, he has lost the battle over his soul, and his alignment changes to the alignment of the fiend inhabiting his soul. If the character's Wisdom is unnaturally low (due to ability score damage or drain) this alignment shift lasts until the character's Wisdom is returned to normal, but during this time, the tainted might commit many more evil acts and thus increase the number of his fiend points.

Spells Per Day/Spells Known: At specified levels gained in the tainted spellcaster prestige class, the character gains new spells per day and new spells known as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (metamagic or item creation feats, new familiar abilities, increased turning ability, and so on). This means that he adds these levels of the tainted spellcaster class to the level of some other spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day, caster level, and spells known (if formerly a bard or a sorcerer) accordingly. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a tainted spellcaster, he must decide to which class he adds the new effective level for the purposes of determining spells per day and spells known.

Eyes of the Fiend (Su): A tainted's true identifying mark, the eyes of the fiend are tattoos burned into the chest of the character. Looking like two orbs of darkest night, they give the character

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a +2 competence bonus to all Intimidate checks and a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks against anyone who can see the tainted's tattoos. In addition, the eyes of the fiend give the tainted darkvision (through his own eyes) with a range of 60 feet.

Fiendish Power I: At 2nd level, the fiend begins to tempt the tainted with its evil gifts. The power granted depends on the type of fiend that possesses the tainted. When spell-like abilities are granted by the fiend, they are as the spells cast by a sorcerer of the tainted's character level.

- **Succubus**—*Change Self (Sp):* The tainted may cast *change self* as a spell-like ability once per day per tainted class level up to a maximum of 5 times per day, but the chosen form must have a beautiful appearance.
- **Bebilith**—*Protection from Chaos/Evil/Good/Law (Sp):* The tainted may cast *protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good,* or *protection from law* on himself as a spell-like ability. The tainted may use this ability once per day per tainted class level up to a maximum of 5 times per day and must choose which version of the spell to cast with each use.
- **Vrock**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*darkness* and *mirror image.*
- **Hezrou**—Stench (Su): The tainted may emit a foul odor once per combat. Anyone within 10 feet of the tainted must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to attack rolls for 1 minute. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect for one creature.
- **Glabrezu**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*charm person* and *enlarge.*
- **Nalfeshnee**—*Detect Chaos/Evil/Good/Law (Sp):* The tainted may cast *detect chaos, detect evil, detect good,* or *detect law* as a spell-like ability. The tainted may use this ability once per day per tainted class level and must choose which version of the spell to cast with each use.
- **Marilith**—Bonus Feats (Ex): The tainted gains Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting as bonus feats.
- **Balor**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*see invisibility.*
- **Osyluth**—Fear Aura (Su): The tainted can radiate a fear aura in a 5-foot-radius burst as a standard action twice per day. All those within the area must succeed at a Will save (DC 13 + the tainted's Charisma modifier) or be affected by a *fear* spell for 1d6 rounds. A creature that saves against an osyluth-tainted's fear aura cannot be affected by that osyluth-tainted's fear aura for the rest of the day. Baatezu are immune to the osyluth-tainted's fear aura.
- **Kyton**—Bonus Feat (Ex): The tainted gains the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain) feat as a bonus feat.
- **Hellcat**—Keen Ears (Ex): The hellcat-tainted gains a +4 competence bonus to all Listen checks.
- **Barbazu**—Battle Frenzy (Ex): Once per day, the tainted can rage like a barbarian, gaining all the usual benefits and suffering all the normal penalties. The benefits of this rage do not stack with those provided by the rage ability of another class.
- **Erinyes**—*Charm Person (Sp):* The tainted may cast *charm person* as a spell-like ability once per day per tainted class level up to a maximum of 5 times per day.
- **Hamatula**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*hold person* and *produce flame.*

REMOVING THE TAINT AND LOSING FIEND POINTS

There is no way to remove fiend points (except by the slow and unlikely process of constantly rolling a natural 20 on a fiend points check) or to change a character's alignment back to normal so long as the fiend remains within the tainted character, but there are ways to expel the fiend.

Level Drain or Loss: If a tainted has one of his levels permanently drained or loses a level due to being raised, he can choose to have it be the highest level of the tainted class he has attained regardless of what class level was most recently gained. By losing levels little by little, the fiend can be removed.

***Wish* or *Miracle*:** One of these spells, if properly worded, can remove one level of the tainted class and replace it with a level of another class the character already has.

Divine Intervention: A DM may rule that a simple *wish* or *miracle* is not enough for clerics or paladins. The PC might have to plead at the feet of her deity for help in expelling the fiend. Assuredly, the god or goddess will ask the hero to perform some great quest in exchange.

- **Cornugon**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*detect thoughts.*
- **Gelugon**—Cold (Su): Once per day, a gelugon-tainted can fill a foe with numbing cold with a successful melee attack or melee touch attack. The tainted can decide to use this ability after the foe has been struck. The struck foe must succeed at a Will

TAINTED SPELLCASTER ADVANCEMENT

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Spells per Day/ Special	Spells Known
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Fiend points, eyes of the fiend	+1 caster level
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Fiendish power I, dream haunting	–
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Minor physical change	+1 caster level
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Fiendish power II	–
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Hallucinations	+1 caster level
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Moderate physical change	–
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Fiendish power III	+1 caster level
8	+6	+2	+2	+6	Telepathy, craving	–
9	+6	+3	+3	+6	Major physical change	+1 caster level
10	+7	+3	+3	+7	Fiendish power IV	–

DESIGN CHALLENGE

The tainted prestige class presents the personality changes, powers, and physical changes of those characters tainted by many of the demons, devils, and yugoloths presented in the *Monster Manual* and the *Manual of the Planes*, but more fiends exist in both books and in the *Monster Manual II*. There are also other fiendish creatures, like the oni presented in *Oriental Adventures*. The tainted class and fiend points could be an intriguing substitute for the Taint and Tainted score presented for the Rokugan setting.

If you like the idea of the tainted prestige class, you can contribute to the game by proposing how the other fiends or the oni might change the tainted people they inhabit.

Send your ideas to scalemail@paizopublishing.com or post them on the *Dragon* message boards. If there is enough interest, we'll print the best ideas as an update in *Dragon* or post an expanded version of the prestige class online.

saving throw (DC 13 + the tainted's Charisma modifier) or be affected as though by a *slow* spell for 1d6 rounds.

• **Pit Fiend**—Constrict (Ex): The tainted gains the ability to constrict foes for an extra 2d4 points of damage with each successful grapple check that is intended to deal damage.

• **Canoloth**—Bonus Feat (Ex): The tainted gains the Blind-Fight feat as a bonus feat.

• **Mezzoloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*see invisibility.*

• **Nycaloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*invisibility.*

• **Ultroloth**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*alter self* and *hypnotic pattern.*

Dream Haunting (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, whenever a tainted falls asleep (or enters trance), he must make a fiend points check. If he fails, his rest is filled with horrifying images of anguish and despair, and he is shaken (suffering a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws) until he defeats a foe in combat, gains a fiend point, or makes a fiend points check (regardless of success or failure). This fiend points check does not cause a gain of fiend points when the tainted fails the check, but a natural roll of 20 causes the tainted to lose a fiend point.

Minor Physical Change (Ex): At 3rd level, the tainted's body shows the first signs of what fiend shares the tainted's soul. The change does not grant any special bonuses or penalties, but it often unnerves those who see it. The exact change depends on the type of possessing demon:

• **Succubus:** Tiny, vestigial bat wings grow on the character's back.

• **Bebilith:** Barbs sprout from the tainted's limbs.

• **Vrock:** The character's nose curves downward, mimicking a vulture's beak.

• **Hezrou:** Warts cover the tainted's entire body.

• **Glabrezu:** The tainted's eyes become violet in color.

• **Nalfeshnee:** The lower canines of the character contort into small tusks.

• **Marilith:** The character's skin becomes green and scaly.

• **Balor:** The character's skin becomes dark red.

• **Osyluth:** The character's fat is stripped away, making him shockingly skinny.

• **Kyton:** The character's eyes glow yellow, and all the hair on his body falls out.

• **Hellcat:** The character's hair grows rapidly but becomes translucent.

• **Barbazu:** The tainted grows a long, snaky beard that attracts vermin.

• **Erinyes:** The tainted sprouts useless, feathered wings from his back.

• **Hamatula:** Small barbs protrude from the tainted's skin.

• **Cornugon:** The tainted grows a short tail.

• **Gelugon:** The tainted's mouth changes into a set of blunt mandibles.

• **Pit Fiend:** The character's teeth now drip a foul-smelling fluid.

• **Canoloth:** The tainted's tongue becomes rough, like a cat's.

• **Mezzoloth:** The tainted's eyes glow red when he's angry.

• **Nycaloth:** The character sprouts a tiny pair of limp arms beneath his current set.

• **Ultroloth:** The tainted's eyes constantly change color at random.

Fiendish Power II: At 4th level, the fiend increases its pressure on the tainted and the potency of its temptations. When spell-like abilities are granted by the fiend, they are as the spells cast by a sorcerer of the tainted's character level.

• **Succubus**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 3/day—*polymorph self* (humanoid-shaped forms only).

• **Bebilith**—Web (Ex): Four times per day, the tainted can shoot webs from the barbs on his limbs as a standard action. This is similar to a *web* spell, with a few exceptions. The range is 30 feet, and the webs are permanent, nonmagical, and cannot be dispelled. The DC for evading or breaking free from the web is 20, and there is a 75% chance that the webbing won't burn if any sort of fire is applied to it (check each round).

• **Vrock**—Spores (Ex): Three times per day, the tainted can make a spores attack like the spores special attack of the vrock, as described on page 45 of the *Monster Manual*. After making a spores attack, the tainted must wait 1d4 rounds before making another.

• **Hezrou**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 2/day—*summon swarm* and *gaseous form.*

• **Galbrezu**—*Spell-Like Abilites (Sp):* 1/day—*confusion* and *deeper darkness.*

• **Nalfeshnee**—Smite (Su): Twice per day, the tainted can cause a nimbus of multicolored light to play around his body. One round after enacting the ability, this nimbus of light explodes outward in a 60-foot-radius burst. Creatures in the area suffer 15 points of damage (Reflex half DC 18).

• **Marilith**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*animate dead* and *inflict serious wounds.*

• **Balor**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*greater dispelling.*

• **Osyluth**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*fly* and *wall of ice.*

• **Kyton**—Chain Control (Su): The tainted can cause any chain in his hand (including a spiked chain) to lengthen 10 feet while it remains in his hand. This increases the reach of any spiked chain wielded by the tainted by 10 feet. In addition, the tainted can now climb chains at his normal speed.

• **Hellcat**—Pouncing Attack (Ex): If the tainted charges a foe during the first round of combat, he can make a full attack even if he has already taken a move action.

• **Barbazu**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 3/day—*magic weapon* and *produce flame.*

• **Erinyes**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 3/day—*suggestion.*

• **Hamatula**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 2/day—*doom* and *major image.*

• **Cornugon**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*dispel chaos.*

• **Gelugon**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*cone of cold.*

• **Pit Fiend**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*wall of fire.*

• **Canoloth**—Blindsight (Ex): The tainted's senses of hearing and scent become so great that he can perceive all creatures and objects within 10 feet. Negating one of the aforementioned senses reduces this ability to the benefits of the Blind-Fight feat. Negating both makes the tainted effectively blind.

• **Mezzoloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 3/day—*dispel magic.*

• **Nycaloth**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*deeper darkness* and *fear.*

• **Ultroloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*prying eyes.*

Hallucinations (Ex): After reaching 5th level, the tainted begins to hallucinate at random. Once per week during a stressful situation, the DM should ask the tainted character to make a fiend points check. If he fails, the mind of the character becomes distorted. He gains a fiend point and is confused for 1d4 rounds as his senses are filled with diabolical images of horror, suffering, and death on a random Lower Plane. A roll of a natural 20 when making the fiend points check causes the tainted to lose 1 fiend point.

Moderate Physical Change (Ex): At 6th level, the tainted undergoes a more severe physical change.

• **Succubus:** The tainted's natural appearance becomes stunningly beautiful, and he gains a confidence that others find compelling. This increases the tainted's Charisma by +2.

• **Bebilith:** The tainted's barbs increase in size and sharpness. His unarmed strikes now deal an additional 1d6 points of piercing damage.

• **Vrock:** The tainted grows feathered wings, giving him a fly speed of 50 feet with average maneuverability.

• **Hezrou:** The tainted's warty skin thickens and becomes even more wart-covered, increasing the tainted's natural armor by +3.

• **Glabrezu:** The tainted's hands twist and deform into crab-like claws. This allows him to make claw attacks that cause 2d4 points of slashing damage. However, the claws are not designed for precise manipulation, so the tainted suffers a -4 circumstance penalty on any check requiring manual precision (such as Pick Pocket, Open Lock, Disable Device, and so on). Note that making a claw attack with each claw incurs the normal penalties for two-weapon fighting, with each claw counting as a light weapon.

• **Nalfeshnee:** The tainted grows hulking and burly, increasing the tainted's Strength by +2.

• **Marilith:** The tainted grows a third arm. In addition, the tainted also gains the Multidexterity and Multiweapon Fighting feats. These feats replace Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting.

• **Balor:** The tainted's skin hardens and becomes scaly, increasing the tainted's natural armor by +3.

• **Osyluth:** The tainted grows a long, bony tail with a scorpion-like stinger on the end. This allows him to make a sting attack that deals 2d4 points of damage.

• **Kyton:** The tainted can fuse chains to his flesh, covering his skin with steel. If he chooses to do so, his natural armor increases by +3. The tainted can remove or fuse the chains as a full-round action.

• **Hellcat:** The tainted's body becomes translucent and pale, granting him a +6 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

• **Barbazu:** The tainted's beard grows longer and more foul. Any foe grappled

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

If you like the idea of roleplaying one of the tortured tainted but think your character would never bargain with a fiend, suggest one of these options to your DM:

Magic Jar: The *magic jar* spell takes on a new, more horrifying angle when demons are involved. Perhaps a fiend can use the spell to cohabit a PC's body, hoping to corrupt the PC from within.

Contact with a Cursed or Evil Item or Artifact: A cursed or evil item could contain a fiend, and when your PC comes in contact with the device, the fiend might enter his soul.

Casting Too Many Evil or Vile Spells: Perhaps casting evil spells opens the door to possession by a fiend. In this case, your DM might find it feasible for you to gain a level of the tainted class after you've cast a few such spells.

Inheritance: The weight of a legacy can be overbearing at times, especially if one of your character's parents was tainted. The character might choose to embrace her fiendish heritage or fight against it.

Miscast Conjuration Spells: Calling and summoning magic is notoriously dangerous, especially when the spellcaster is calling a fiend. If a spellcaster encounters a mishap while casting a Conjuration spell, a fiend could sneak its way into his soul.

Even if you don't want to take levels in the tainted prestige class, you can use the fiend points system as a guide to govern alignment change. Using the fiend points system as a means of tracking how much of evil's taint has clung to your character offers a great guide to your role-playing choices. When you first decide that your character is struggling with internal evil, assign a starting number of fiend points. As she progresses through play, make fiend points checks whenever you deem appropriate, and roleplay the results. In this variant, you should feel free to introduce ways that your character can loose fiend points as well as gain them.

by the tainted has a chance to be infected by devil chills (Fortitude save, DC 14). See the barbazu's description in the *Monster Manual* for more details about the devil chills disease.

• **Erinyes:** The tainted's wings are now fully grown, allowing him to fly at a speed of 50 feet with average maneuverability.

• **Hamatula:** The tainted grows long claws on his hands, allowing him to make a claw attack with each hand that causes 1d6 points of slashing damage. Note that making a claw attack with each hand incurs the normal penalties for two-weapon fighting, with each hand counting as a light weapon.

• **Cornugon:** The tainted's tail extends, allowing him to make a tail attack that causes 1d3 points of bludgeoning damage. In addition, the tainted's skin grows thick scales, increasing his natural armor by +2.

• **Gelugon:** The tainted's mandibles sharpen, allowing him to make a bite attack that causes 2d4 points of damage.

• **Pit Fiend:** The tainted grows a long tail, allowing him to make a tail attack that causes 2d4 points of damage.

• **Canoloth:** The tainted's barbed tongue grows longer, allowing him to make a tongue attack that causes 1d4 points of slashing damage. The tainted gains the improved grab ability, but only with his tongue attack.

• **Mezzoloth:** The tainted's skin becomes like an insect's chitin, granting him a +3 natural armor bonus to AC.

• **Nycaloth:** The tainted's small set of extra arms grows to match his original pair. The tainted must take the Multidexterity and Multiweapon Fighting feats or using more than one arm to attack causes the usual penalties.

• **Ultroloth:** The tainted's brain cavity shifts and grows, elongating his skull. This enhanced intellect grants the tainted a +2 inherent bonus to his Intelligence score.

Fiendish Power III: If the tainted has not fallen by this point, the fiend continues to tempt it with unholy abilities. When spell-like abilities are granted by the fiend, they are as the spells cast by a sorcerer of the tainted's character level.

• **Succubus**—Tongues (Su): The tainted can speak and understand any language, but he can read and write only those he normally knows or learns.

• **Bebilith**—Climbing Barbs (Ex): Strong barbs grow from all the tainted's limbs, making climbing surfaces easy. The tainted gains a climb speed of 20 feet and the usual +8 racial bonus to climb checks.

• **Vrock**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

• **Hezrou**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 3/day—*gaseous form.*

• **Glabrezu**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*reverse gravity.*

• **Nalfeshnee**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*call lightning* and *feeblemind.*

• **Marilith**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

• **Balor**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*firestorm*

• **Osyluth**—Poison (Ex): Sting, Fortitude save (DC 14); initial damage 1d4 temporary Strength, secondary damage 2d4 temporary Strength.

• **Kyton**—Unnerving Gaze (Su): The tainted can make his face resemble his opponents' departed loved ones or bitter enemies. Foes subjected to the gaze must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or suffer a -1 morale penalty to all attack rolls for 1d3 rounds.

• **Hellcat**—Rake (Ex): When the tainted grapples a foe, he can make two rake attacks with his hind legs at his full attack bonus. Each rake attack causes 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage. If the tainted pounces, he can also rake.

• **Barbazu**—Battle Frenzy (Ex): Once per day, the tainted can work himself into a battle frenzy similar to a barbarian's rage but without the ill effects afterward. See the barbazu's description in the *Monster Manual* for more details.

• **Erinyes**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* At will—*animate rope.*

• **Hamatula**—Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the tainted must hit with a claw attack. Once he gains his major physical change, the tainted can impale the opponent on his barbed body if he gets a hold.

• **Cornugon**—Stun (Su): Foes damaged by the tainted's tail attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 17) or be stunned for 1 round.

• **Gelugon**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

• **Pit Fiend**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

• **Canoloth**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* At will—*detect good* and *detect magic.*

• **Mezzoloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*cloudkill.*

• **Nycaloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—*teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only).

• **Ultroloth**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 3/day—*scrying.*

Telepathy (Su): An 8th-level tainted gains the fiendish ability to speak telepathically to other creatures within 100 feet.

Craving (Su): Upon reaching 8th level, a tainted must make a fiend points check every day at dusk. In addition to the normal results of a fiend points check, failure means the tainted must kill (or destroy, in the case of undead or constructs) a number of creatures whose total Hit Dice equals the tainted's class level before the sun comes up. If the tainted cannot meet his quota, he suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, damage rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws until the quota is met. The penalties cannot be removed by any other means short of a *wish* or *miracle* spell.

Major Physical Change (Ex): By 9th level, the tainted has fought with the fiend within so much that he changes dramatically in form to match his archenemy.

• **Succubus:** The tainted grows long, powerful claws on his hands that cause 1d4 points of slashing damage on a successful hit. Bat wings sprout from the tainted's spine, granting a fly speed of 50 feet with average maneuverability.

• **Bebilith:** The tainted's mouth grows deadly mandibles, allowing him to make a bite attack that deals 2d6 points of damage. In addition, the tainted's climb speed now equals half his land speed or 20 feet, whichever is better.

• **Vrock:** The tainted's face becomes like that of the vrock, causing him to grow a beak. This grants the tainted a bite attack that causes 1d6 points of damage. In addition, the tainted can make the stunning screech attack of the vrock once per hour. Every creature within 30 feet must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 17) or be stunned for 1 round. The stunning screech is a sound-based supernatural ability.

• **Hezrou:** The tainted's mouth becomes large and frog-like, filling with many blunt teeth. This grants the tainted a bite attack that deals 4d4 points of damage.

• **Glabrezu:** The tainted's skin toughens, granting him a +7 increase to his natural armor.

• **Nalfeshnee:** The tainted grows more hulking and burly, increasing the tainted's Constitution by +2 and increasing his Strength by an additional +2.

• **Marilith:** The tainted's legs disappear, replaced by a snake's tail. The tainted gains a tail slam attack that causes 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage. Additionally, the tainted can constrict an opponent during a grapple, dealing 4d6 points of damage. The constrict attack only works against Medium-size or smaller foes.

• **Balor:** Huge wings spring from the tainted's spine, allowing him to fly at a rate of 90 feet with good maneuverability.

• **Osyluth:** The tainted's form becomes "skin and bones." His skeleton hardens, increasing his natural armor by +5. This also enhances his frightful appearance, increasing the DC of his fear aura ability by +2.

• **Kyton:** Chains fused to the tainted's body grow thicker and stronger, making the natural armor increase the chains provide +9.

• **Hellcat:** Like the hellcat, the tainted becomes invisible in any area lit well enough for a human to see. In other conditions, the tainted glows slightly and is visible from 30 feet away (60 feet away if the viewer has low-light vision).

• **Barbazu:** The tainted's skin grows as moist and scaly as a barbazu's, granting him cold and acid resistance 20.

• **Erinyes:** The tainted becomes a striking figure, and his Charisma increases by +4.

• **Hamatula:** The tainted's body is now covered in razor-sharp barbs. Any time the tainted succeeds at a grapple check to establish the initial hold on a foe or to damage a foe, he impales the foe on his body barbs dealing an additional 3d4 points of piercing damage.

• **Cornugon:** The tainted's muscles bulge beneath his scales, and his Strength increases by +4.

• **Gelugon:** The tainted's breath is now suffused with a hellish chill. Any

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Taking a level of the tainted prestige class should be a choice a player makes for her character, not a decision made by the DM. It's unfair and less fun when a DM forces a player's character to advance in a particular way, especially when such an advance could be disadvantageous. Most players will dislike being forced to take a level of the class, but there are ways to entice players to choose this unique roleplaying opportunity.

Fiendish Bargain: The character could choose to take a level of the tainted prestige class after making a bargain with a fiend. This bargain might entail some special ritual in which the fiend and character join bodies, it could require that the character sign a magic contract, or maybe the character must simply verbally agree. Many characters wouldn't dream of making such a bargain, but circumstances could change the PC's mind. Perhaps the fiend promises to help the party in a dangerous battle or save a doomed companion if a PC will accept the power it can provide.

Flawed Wish: Wishes can be twisted around in strange and unfortunate ways. A PC's wish for greater power or Strength could be granted in the form of a free level increase. Of course, the level is a level of the tainted prestige class. Now the character must decide whether to find a way to remove the stain on his soul or capitalize on his newfound power.

Constant Temptation: It might be fun to present the players with a constant source of temptation. Perhaps the PCs need a powerful sentient item, imbued with the spirits of fiends, to defeat a greater threat or destroy a more powerful artifact of evil. While they carry it, the item could implore its wielder to accept a power only it can provide, explaining how that power could help in many different situations.

Back from the Dead: A character being brought back from the dead might be met by a fiend on her soul's journey back to her body. The fiend can offer new power in the form of a level of the tainted class to replace the level that would be lost to death.

HOW DOES A CHARACTER BECOME TAINTED?

This article presents no game mechanic for how a character becomes tainted because level advancement should be a choice left in the hands of the player. The article also provides no means by which the fiend can be forcibly expelled from a character. Any such means could then be used against the PC, causing her to lose hard-won class abilities or even class levels. Playing a tainted character is thus a roleplaying choice, but the question remains: How does a character become tainted? How do you explain becoming tainted within the confines of the campaign world? Here are a few of the possible answers:

Shared Soul: The fiend spares part of its soul and consciousness for the PC. This gives the PC great power, but the fiend rides along with the character, learning what he learns and always present with a clever mental quip or temptation. This allows the fiend to act on the knowledge it gains from the PC, and it presents the disturbing possibility that the tainted PC might need to protect his source of power.

Possession: The fiend bodily leaps into the PC, merging its form and mind with the character. Like with a shared soul, the fiend knows what the character knows and can mentally tempt the character, but unlike when tainted share their souls, the fiend is trapped within the tainted's body to be released only when she dies or her alignment matches the fiend within.

Magic of the Pact: The magic of the pact is enough to seal the bargain, and the fiend and tainted can go their separate ways—although the fiend might return to check on its prodigy's progress. In this version of becoming tainted, the fiend gains no special knowledge of the PC and merely acts as a facilitator to the PC's aspirations for power.

time the tainted damages a foe with his bite attack, that foe must save against the tainted's cold ability. The cold ability is still a supernatural ability.

• **Pit Fiend:** The tainted's teeth lengthen into sharp tusk-like fangs and the green liquid dripping from them becomes a vile poison. The Fortitude save to resist the effects of the poison has a DC of 21. The initial damage is 1d4 temporary Constitution and the secondary damage is 1d4 Constitution.

• **Canoloth:** The tainted's form becomes hunched over, and he can now walk about on all fours should he wish. When the tainted carries nothing in his hands, he can move about on all fours, increasing his speed by 20 feet. His skin hardens, increasing his natural armor by +5.

• **Mezzoloth:** The tainted's body becomes inured to most attacks, granting the tainted damage reduction 5/+1.

• **Nycaloth:** A pair of huge green bat wings spring from the tainted's back, giving him a fly speed of 90 feet with good maneuverability.

• **Ultroloth:** The tainted's brain continues to grow, lengthening his cranium out of proportion. The tainted's Intelligence increases by an additional +4.

Fiendish Power IV: Further drawing on its vile potency, the fiend continues to entice the tainted with dark gifts. When spell-like abilities are granted by the fiend, they are as the spells cast by a sorcerer of the tainted's character level.

• **Succubus**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 5/day—*charm monster.*

• **Bebilith**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*plane shift.*

• **Vrock**—Dance of Ruin (Su): If the tainted dances for 3 rounds, a wave of crackling energy flashes outward, dealing 2d20 points of damage to all nondemon creatures within 100 feet (Reflex half DC 15). If the dance is stopped, the effect is cancelled. Unlike the vrock's ability of the same name, the tainted does not have to be dancing in a group to use it.

• **Hezrou**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 2/day—*blasphemy.*

• **Glabrezu**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 5/day—*chaos hammer.*

• **Nalfeshnee**—See Invisibility (Su): The tainted continually sees invisibility, as the spell.

• **Marilith**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 5/day—*bestow curse.*

• **Balor**—Body Flames (Su): The tainted can wreathe his body in flames as a standard action. The tainted suffers no harm, but anyone grappling with him suffers 4d6 points of fire damage per round. The flames last 1 round per class level and can be invoked once per day.

• **Osyluth**—Know Alignment (Su): The tainted always knows the alignment of any creature he looks upon.

• **Kyton**—Animate Chain (Su): When taking the full-attack action, the tainted can command the spiked chain he wields to make an attack at his highest attack bonus once per round.

• **Hellcat**—Scent (Ex): The tainted gains the scent special quality described in the *Monster Manual.*

• **Barbazu**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* At will—*fear* (touch range, not cone; one creature only).

• **Erinyes**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 5/day—*charm monster.*

• **Hamatula**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 2/day—*order's wrath* and *unholy blight.*

• **Cornugon**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 3/day—*fireball* and *lightning bolt.*

• **Gelugon**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 3/day—*fly* and *suggestion.*

• **Pit Fiend**—*Spell-Like Ability (Sp):* 1/day—unholy aura.

• **Canoloth**—Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by the tainted's tongue attack must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be paralyzed for 1 minute.

• **Mezzoloth**—Spell Resistance (Su): The tainted gains spell resistance equal to 10 plus his tainted class level.

• **Nycaloth**—Wounding Claws (Ex): The tainted's second set of arms grows nasty claws that can cause 1d6 points of slashing damage with a successful hit. A living creature damaged by a claw continues to bleed for 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple claw wounds result in cumulative bleeding loss (two wounds deal 2 points of damage per round, and so on). The bleeding can be stopped only by a successful Heal check (DC 15) or the application of any *cure* spell or other healing spell (*heal, healing circle,* and so on).

• **Ultroloth**—*Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):* 1/day—*geas/quest* and *mass suggestion.* D

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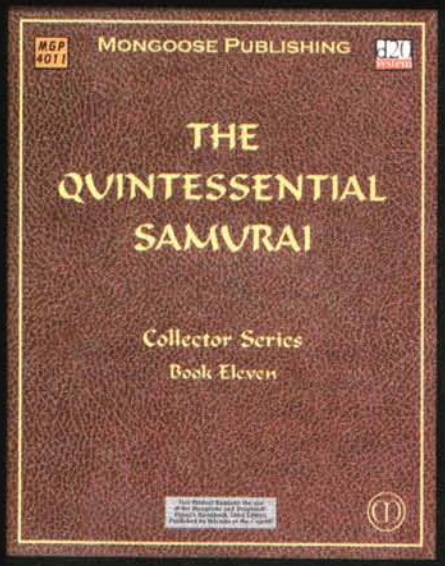

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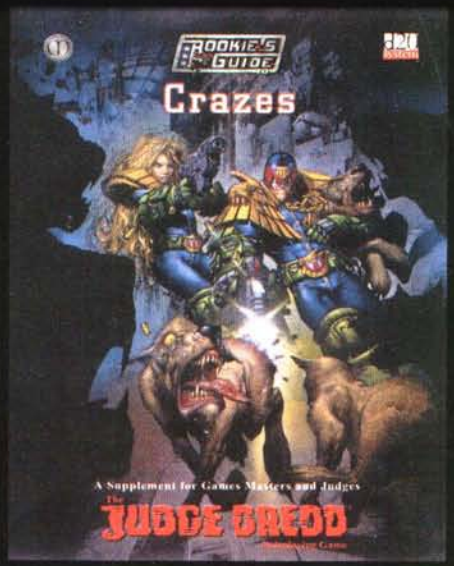

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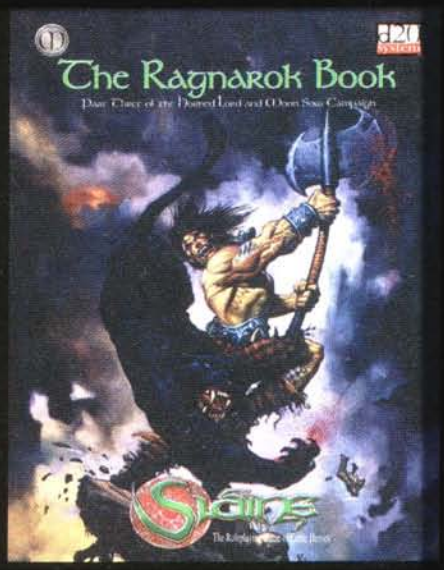

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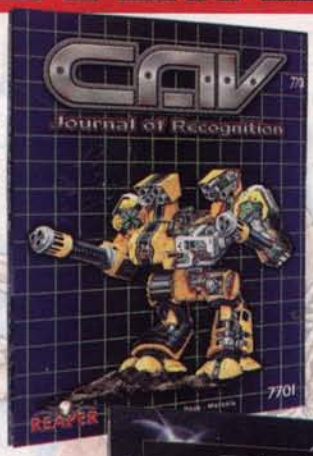

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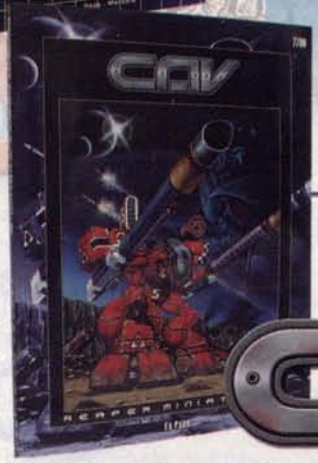

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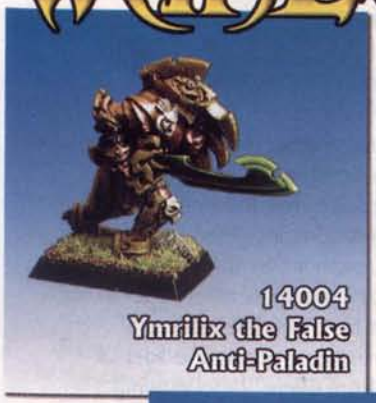

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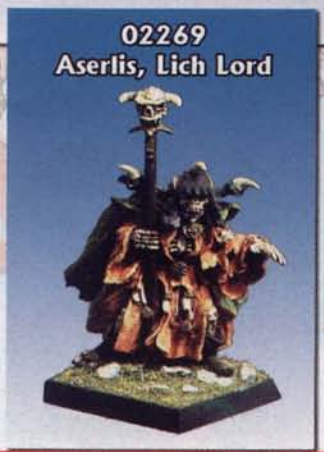

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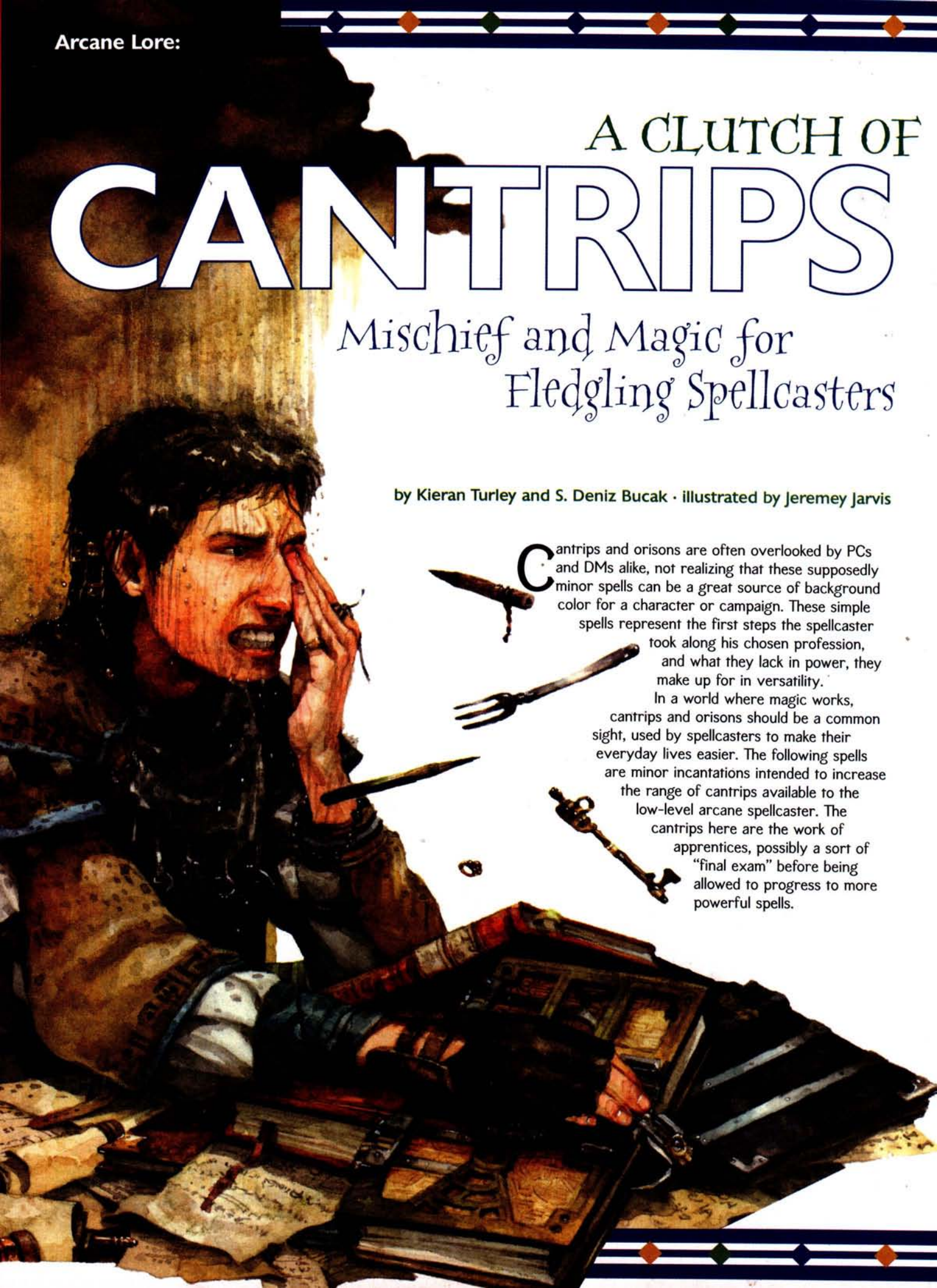


Cantrips and orisons are often overlooked by PCs and DMs alike, not realizing that these supposedly minor spells can be a great source of background color for a character or campaign. These simple spells represent the first steps the spellcaster took along his chosen profession, and what they lack in power, they make up for in versatility.

In a world where magic works, cantrips and orisons should be a common sight, used by spellcasters to make their everyday lives easier. The following spells are minor incantations intended to increase the range of cantrips available to the low-level arcane spellcaster. The cantrips here are the work of apprentices, possibly a sort of "final exam" before being allowed to progress to more powerful spells.

ZAP TRAP

Conjuration (Creation) [Electricity]
Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Effect: One rune about 3 inches in diameter
Duration: Permanent or until discharged
Saving Throw: Reflex negates
Spell Resistance: No

Zap trap creates a rune 3 inches in diameter that can be traced on any surface. The next person to touch the rune gets an electrical shock for 1 point of damage. The symbol is faint and silver in color. Detecting the faint rune requires a DC 20 Search check.

Material Component: 1 gp worth of powdered silver.

DEFTNESS

Divination
Level: Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 minute or until discharged
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Deftness adds a +2 insight bonus to the next skill check the target makes.

FORAGING CHARM

Divination
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: 25-ft.-radius emanation from the caster
Duration: Concentration
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

An apprentice to the wizard Chardrix created this spell following a very lean trek across the desert. Chardrix liked the spell so much that he created similar divinations to search for small game and water. Chardrix is a good salesman and has sold this spell to dozens of traveling magicians over the last few years. The apprentice who created the spell has fallen into obscurity and is not even credited for his most popular work.

The caster of this spell knows the location of the nearest vegetable food source within the range of the spell. As long as concentration is maintained, the spell stays in existence allowing the caster to forage for food all day in sparsely vegetated areas.

PERFECT PITCH

Divination
Level: Brd 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: S, F
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level or until discharged
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: No

This cantrip gives the caster perfect pitch. The caster can figure out the notes to any song just by hearing it and gains a +2 insight bonus to his next musical Perform check.

Arcane Focus: A tuning fork.

THUNDERHEAD

Evocation [Electricity]
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5ft./level)
Target: One creature
Duration: 3 rounds
Saving Throw: Reflex negates (see below)
Spell Resistance: Yes

Thunderhead was created by the ill-fated evoker Scira Oakenfire during her apprenticeship. The spell was intended to scare peasants and annoy spellcasters but has little real power. Scira was killed after casting the spell on an "ill-mannered peasant" who turned out to be the head of the assassins' guild.

Thunderhead creates a small thundercloud over the target's head. Every round of the spell's duration, a miniature bolt of lightning leaps from the thundercloud to strike the target's head. Each bolt inflicts 1 point of electricity damage that is negated by a successful Reflex save.

Material Component: Small piece of copper wire.

COIN OF THE REALM

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: 1 pebble
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Yes (see text)
Spell Resistance: No

When Twiral the Charming stumbled upon this cantrip in the library of the academy where he was studying, he thought it was the answer to his prayers. Soon Twiral was living the high life. At first, the apprentice was careful not to draw attention to himself and only spent the coin in busy taverns where it would go unnoticed. Later, Twiral became sloppy and ran up debts that he couldn't pay off with a single coin. The debt collectors went to the young apprentice's masters, and the whole truth came out. Twiral spent the next 6 months finding out what the life of a stable boy was like.

This spell cloaks a pebble in an illusion, making it seem to be a gold coin of whatever design the caster chooses.

Note: Creatures touching the coin or studying it are allowed Will saves to recognize the glamer as an illusion.

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

These 0-level spells also offer an easy way to represent differences in training that apprentice spellcasters undergo. Instead of beginning play with all of the cantrips in the Player's Handbook in their spellbooks, wizards can select sixteen cantrips to put in their spellbook for "free." Clerics start play by choosing a list of twelve orisons, and druids start with thirteen. Of course, always check with your DM before using a new spell in her game.

FLAG

Illusion (Figment)
Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes

Flag causes an illusory flag 2 feet by 3 feet to appear over the target's head. The flag can be 1-20 feet up in the air and has a design of the caster's choice. The spell is useful as a signal, to rally troops, or, as it was originally used, to mark which team you're on in a pick-up game of Thalft.

MIRROR

Illusion (Figment)
Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: One illusory surface up to 1 sq. ft. in area
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will Negates
Spell Resistance: No

Mirror creates a one-square-foot mirrored surface that can be shaped and positioned as the caster desires. The mirror is insubstantial, and objects pass through it without problem. The mirrored area is also transparent from the other side, so the spell can be used for a one-way mirror effect if placed over a window or similar opening. As a move-equivalent action, the caster can concentrate and cause the mirror to move anywhere within range.

STENCH

Illusion (Figment)
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: 10-ft.-radius emanation
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: No

Stench creates a terrible smell in a 10-foot radius. It can be any smell the caster wishes. Any creature within the area of effect with the scent ability must succeed at a Will save or lose use of the ability while within the area.

FOOTPAD'S GRACE

Transmutation
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Concentration

This spell was the work of Belem Shadelighter, an apprentice who, despite a great aptitude for the art, chose to pursue a more lucrative career as a thief. Belem used his magic to become one of the most infamous thieves in history. No record exists of Belem's fate. Some say he fell prey to a fiendish trap or that the god of thieves called him as his personal servant. Others claim that Belem exists to this day as a lich, surrounded in an almost impregnable fortress with layers of traps and the treasure of ten kingdoms at his feet.

The spell mutes all sound that the caster makes, bestowing a +3 bonus to his Move Silently checks.

Material Component: A tiny pillow that is used up in casting the spell.

GLITTERING RAZORS

Transmutation
Level: Brd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Touch
Target: 1 metal object/caster level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The apprentice Ogrim Stonebinder created this spell in order to make enough money to pay for tutelage from the Archmage Ulteaha the Dragonslayer. Ogrim intended to spend a year charging to cast the spell on adventurer's weapons, but instead, the King's court wizard, upon seeing the spell's potential, offered to pay for Orgrim's tutoring in exchange for use of the spell. Ogrim lives in luxury today, specializing in the creation of new spells that others might find useful.

This spell polishes to a perfect shine any metal object touched by the caster. In addition to this effect, bladed weapons enchanted thus gain a +1 to damage for their next strike only. The spell effect is instantaneous and does not prevent further soiling of the object due to normal tarnishing and wear.

Material Component: A pinch of polish and a piece of rag.

HEAT WATER

Transmutation
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 5 ft.
Target: 2 pints of liquid
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes

An unknown halfling apprentice created this spell. Hailed as one of the most useful spells ever created, *heat water* was originally intended as a cooking tool for those times when no fire was available (such as while traveling through dangerous lands). The cantrip has been used in many tasks, from alchemy to cleaning to food preparation. *Heat water* is even said to have saved its creator's life when she threw boiling water into the face of a goblin attacker.

This spell causes up to 2 pints of liquid in a container to heat up. The spell takes 1 minute to bring water from cold to boiling point. The water can be kept at any temperature the caster wishes (above or at room temperature) as long

as she concentrates. If further water is added to the container, the spell ends.

RESIZE

Transmutation
Level: Clr 0, Drd 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One article of clothing or armor
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (object)
Spell Resistance: Yes

Resize alters one piece of non-magical clothing or armor to fit a differently sized creature. The object to be resized can be expanded or shrunk to fit a target up to one size larger or smaller than it originally fit. If *resize* is dispelled, the clothing or armor falls off its wearer and returns to normal size.

YELL

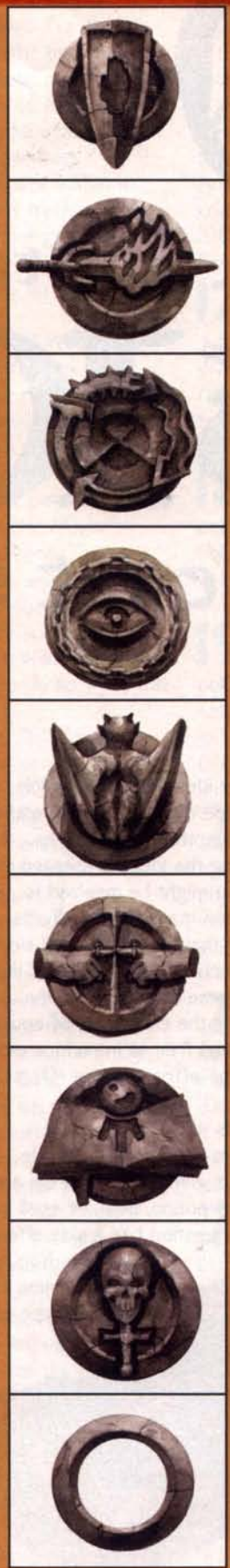
Transmutation
Level: Brd 0, Drd 0, Clr 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute or until discharged

This cantrip amplifies the caster's voice for one message up to 10 words in length. The amplification gives those within earshot a +10 to Listen rolls made to hear the message.

MYSTIC SYMBOLS

The symbols spaced throughout the article and shown again here to the right each represent a different school of magic. Although they'll be limited to labeling new spells in the magazine, there's no reason you can't use them for other things in your campaign. If you photocopy the symbols to the right, you can use them as your character's arcane mark, as the symbol for a guild or group of adventurers, as a personal emblem for a magic-inclined noble house, as a banner for a group of monsters or mercenaries, or even as dungeon dressing if you use miniatures and a battlemat.

In general, regular, recognizable symbols can be a great way to add detail to a campaign. They give both players and DMs a visual way to connect individuals who belong to a group, and they can quickly convey a lot of information about a group's alignment and goals.



ABJURATION
Abjurations are protective spells and barriers.

In your campaign, the symbol could represent an individual PC, a group of dwarven bodyguards, a signature mark that appears whenever abjuration magic is detected, and so on.

EVOCATION
Evocations manipulate energy, often releasing great destructive forces.

The symbol could also represent a group of spellswords, an evil group of mercenaries, or the servants of a powerful and destructive wizard.

TRANSMUTATION
Transmutation spells change the properties of some creature, thing, or condition.

In your campaign, this symbol could also represent a group of chaos cultists or a spellcaster who favors elemental magic.

ENCHANTMENT
Enchantment spells affect the minds of others, influencing or controlling their behavior.

Other uses for this symbol include using it as the emblem for a group of seers or a group of knights dedicated to vigilance against evil.

CONJURATION
Conjurations bring manifestations of objects, creatures, or some form of energy to you.

This symbol could represent a group of demon worshipers or a group of knights dedicated to caging evil creatures.

ILLUSION
Illusion spells deceive the senses and the minds of others.

This symbol could also be used as the emblem for a group of thieves or a group of priests and wizards specializing in mirror magic.

DIVINATION
Divination spells enable you to learn secrets long forgotten and to find hidden things.

This symbol could also represent a guild of fortune tellers or a group of fanatics obsessed with some future doom.

NECROMANCY
Necromancy spells harness the power of death.

This symbol could also represent any number of death cults, demon or devil worshipers, a group of powerful intelligent undead, or any similar evil group.

UNIVERSAL
Universal spells affect other spells or change the very nature of magic or reality itself.

This symbol could represent a group of beings devoted to peace and unity or a group of fanatics dedicated to the destruction of everything.

60 Unstable Arcana

MAGICAL Side Effects

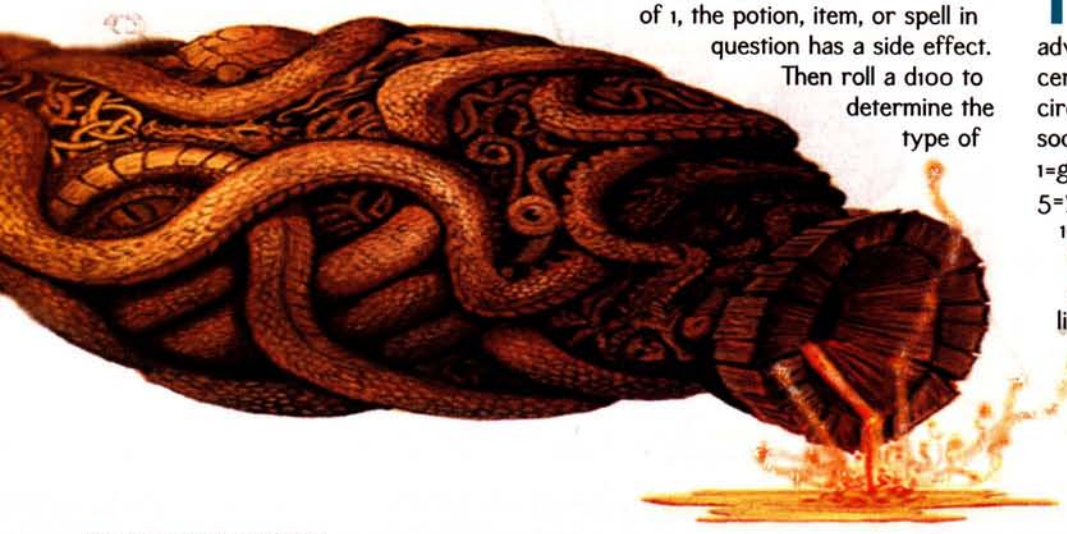
by Kieran Turley · illustrated by David Wahlstrom

Nothing is perfect. A thousand things can go wrong when brewing a potion, preparing a scroll, or casting a spell. The wizard's cat familiar might shed into the cauldron, the vital ingredient for a scroll's ink might be a bit stale, or the wizard in the lab next door might be working powerful magic that affects a spell while it's being cast. The creator of a potion might deliberately include some side effects. For example, a cleric working for the city guard might make healing potions that turn the user blue for a day so that if they are stolen and used, the culprits might be easily identified. This article presents 60 side effects you can add to your potions or other magic forms.

After reading the ideas presented in this article, you might be inspired to create your own magical side effects, but remember that player-created side effects should change the flavor of the spell, not it's game effects. If it's the right choice for the campaign, of course, a DM should feel free to introduce more serious or game-affecting side effects.

Side Effects

If you decide to include magical side effects in your game, roll 1d20. On a roll of 1, the potion, item, or spell in question has a side effect. Then roll a d100 to determine the type of side effect. Unless otherwise stated, the side effects last for 1 hour from when the potion is consumed. All effects allow a Fortitude save DC 13 to resist unless otherwise stated. If you or your DM determines that a potion has a side effect, choose one from the list below. If you prefer to generate the side effects randomly, simply roll 1d6 (treating "6" as "0" except for the result of "60") to find the 10's digit and 1d10 to find the 1's digit. If the side effect is uninteresting or doesn't make sense for a particular spell or item, feel free to reroll the result.



1 Color Change. The drinker's skin changes color. This might be advantageous, providing camouflage in certain situations or it might result in circumstance penalties to skill checks in social situations. Roll 1d10 for Color: 1=green, 2=blue, 3=red, 4=black, 5=yellow, 6=purple, 8=brown, 9=white, 10=grey.

2 Extra Limb. The drinker grows an extra limb. The limb dangles limply, occasionally mimicking the movement of other nearby limbs. The new limb sprouts from the drinker's shoulder in the case of an arm or his hip in the

case of a leg. The limb does not affect the user's equipment, provide additional attacks, or affect most in-game situations, but a DM might rule that the limb provides some circumstance penalties in social situations.

3 Hiccups. The drinker hiccups uncontrollably for the next hour. Spellcasters must make a successful Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) in order to cast a spell with a verbal component. The drinker suffers a -2 penalty to Move Silently checks until the potion's effect wears off.

4 Horrible Taste. The potion tastes terrible. The drinker throws up the potion and gains no benefit from it.

5 Body Odor. The potion changes the user's body chemistry slightly. For 10 minutes after the imbiber drinks the potion or uses the effect, creatures with scent always know the exact square that imbiber occupies provided they are within 20 feet. Creatures tracking the imbiber by scent gain a +4 bonus to their Wilderness Lore checks to do so while the effect lasts.

6 Frothing. The potion causes the drinker to froth at the mouth uncontrollably and prolifically for the next hour. Until the effect ends, spellcasters must make a successful Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) in order to cast a spell with a verbal component. Roll 1d6 for the color of the froth: 1=white, 2=black, 3=blue, 4=yellow, 5=red, 6=green.

7 Acidic. The potion is highly acidic. In addition to its normal effects, the imbiber suffers 1d6 points of acid damage.

8 Strong Taste. The potion has a strong taste. Roll 1d6 for taste: 1=onions, 2=beer, 3=horse manure, 4=garlic, 5=cabbage, 6=vanilla. The wearer smells strongly of whatever substance the potion tastes like. For 10 minutes after the imbiber drinks the potion or uses the effect, creatures with scent always know the exact square that imbiber occupies provided they are within 10 feet. Creatures tracking the imbiber by scent gain a +4 bonus to their Wilderness Lore checks to do so while the effect lasts.

9 Scent of the Wolf. The drinker emits the scent of a predator for the next hour. Domestic animals, including dogs and horses, begin with an initial attitude of hostile. See the Animal Empathy skill description in the *Player's Handbook* for more information on animal attitudes. Creatures tracking the imbiber by scent gain a +4 bonus to their Wilderness Lore checks to do so while the effect lasts.

10 Singing. The drinker must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 13) or be compelled to sing until her next action. The singing prevents the imbiber from casting spells with verbal components until the round has elapsed.

11 Thirst Quencher. This potion quenches thirst. The drinker does not need to drink for the rest of the day.

12 Elephant Ears. The drinker's ears grow to the size of dinner plates. The drinker receives a +2 competence bonus to Listen checks for the next hour.

13 Steamer. The drinker emits steam and mist for the next hour. The steam is harmless and easily dispersed by movement or even a light breeze, but a DM might rule that the steam provides some circumstance penalties to skill checks in social situations.

14 Wondrous. Roll for an effect on the *rod of wonders* table in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

15 Belch of Titans. The drinker belches once with the same effect as a thunderstone.

16 Belch of Efreeti. The drinker belches a 30-foot-long cone of fire. Anything caught within the cone must make a Reflex save (DC 13) or take 2d6 points of fire damage.

17 Bearded. The drinker (male or female) grows a 3-foot long beard. If the drinker already had a beard, it falls out instead. The beard falls out after an hour regardless.

18 Change Hair. The drinker's hair changes color temporarily. Roll 1d6 for color: 1=blonde, 2=red, 3=brown, 4=black, 5=grey, 6=blue.

19 Change Eyes. The drinker's eyes change color temporarily. Roll 1d6 for color: 1=brown, 2=grey, 3=blue, 4=green, 5=yellow, 6=combination (roll twice, ignoring any sixes).

20 Ghostly. The drinker becomes slightly translucent. There is no physical effect (the imbiber is still completely corporeal), and the drinker gains no ghost-like abilities.

21 Big Gulp. There is a lot more of the potion than there seems. The drinker must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) to drink it all at once. If the imbiber fails the saving throw, the potion takes two standard actions to drink.

22 Lodestone. The drinker becomes a living magnet. The drinker suffers a -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls when using a metal weapon. Opponents attacking the drinker with metal weapons gain a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls.

23 Eyes Glow. The drinker's eyes burn with the potion's power. The drinker's eyes serve as a light source of the intensity of a

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Although most game experiences benefit from clear spell effects without these side effects, occasional strange effects or descriptions can keep magic fresh and interesting. The side effects here can easily be combined with the ideas from the "The Play's the Thing" article in this issue on customizing magic to a specific caster.

The listed chance for a potion to be flawed is 5%, but a DM can increase or decrease this by as much as he feels comfortable with. The DM might rule that potions that have been lying in a musty tomb for three hundred years might be more likely to have unusual effects. The DM might also decide that there is only a tiny chance for flaws in potions created by a certain renowned alchemist.

Although intended for potions, the list below could be used as inspiration for magical side effects of any kind. Spells, wands, scrolls, magic of a particular school, spell-like or supernatural abilities, and even unusual feats and skills could all produce strange and distracting effects. A light-hearted game where abilities of every kind have these side effects is possible, but more reserved ideas are probably the best way to bring these side effects into a game.

One interesting idea involves making spells of a new spellcasting level have side effects for two or three game sessions after the spellcaster gains a new level. For example, Kaldessa earns her 5th wizard level. For the next three sessions her new 3rd-level spells, *fly* and *haste*, turn the target blue in addition to having their desired effect. After a few sessions, Kaldessa's DM rules that she has finally perfected the spells, and the unwanted side effect goes away.

torch. The drinker suffers no penalty for having the light in his eyes, but it might be difficult for the imbiber to hide.

24 Intoxicating. The potion is the equivalent of 10 mugs of ale. The drinker becomes intoxicated and suffers a -4 effective penalty to Dexterity and Wisdom for 1d4 hours.

25 Camouflage. The drinker blends into his surroundings almost perfectly. The drinker gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in addition to the potion's normal effects.

26 Diseased. The potion is infected with blinding sickness. See page 175 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details on blinding sickness.

27 Toothy Grin. The drinker's teeth become elongated, sharp, and pointed. The strange teeth do not affect most in-game situations, but a DM might rule that they provide some circumstance penalties in social situations.

28 Healing. The potion has a minor healing effect. The potion restores an additional 1d4 hit points when imbibed in addition to its normal effects.

29 Slimy Hands. The drinker's hands become slimy, and he has to make a Reflex saving throw (DC 12) each round to maintain his grip on any object he is holding.

30 Sticky. The drinker's skin becomes sticky, like powerful glue. The drinker must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10) to drop an object that she is holding.

31 Aura of Cold. The imbiber becomes noticeably cool to the touch. Although the imbiber feels a severe chill, the cold is not great enough to damage either the imbiber or any other creature.

32 Aura of Warmth. The imbiber becomes noticeably warm to the touch. Although the imbiber feels a severe warmth, the heat is not great enough to damage either the imbiber or any other creature.

33 Tongue Growth. The drinker's tongue grows to 3 feet in length. The drinker cannot speak properly and must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast spells with a verbal component.

34 Scale Growth. The drinker grows scales all over his body. Roll 1d6 to determine the color of the scales: 1=blue, 2=black, 3=green, 4=red, 5=yellow, 6=brown.

35 Hummingbird. The drinker gains the ability to levitate for brief periods. The ability to levitate lasts for 10 minutes, but the imbiber can only hover 1 foot off the ground at most and can only hover for a number of rounds equal to her Constitution modifier (minimum one).

36 Warm to Drink. The potion is warm, like tea or coffee. In addition to its normal effect, the potion heals 1d6 points of subdual damage caused by exposure to cold weather.

37 Cold to Drink. The potion is cold, like ice water. In addition to its normal effect, the potion heals 1d6 points of subdual damage caused by exposure to warm weather.

38 Drowsiness. The drinker becomes drowsy.

39 Constant Alert. The drinker needs no sleep for 24 hours.

40 Weight Gain. The drinker increases in weight by 20 pounds until the effects wear off. This extra weight counts against the imbiber's encumbrance limit.

41 Weight loss. The drinker's weight decreases by 20 pounds until the effects wear off.

42 Amnesia. The drinker forgets the events of the last 1d10 minutes.

43 Staining. The potion stains the drinker's lips blue for the next 1d6 days.

44 Mask of Terror. The drinker emits the effects of a *fear* spell on creatures within 30 feet that see him drink the potion.

45 Cramps. The potion causes severe stomach cramping. The drinker suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls and skill checks.

46 Tiny Voice. The drinker's voice becomes high pitched like a pixie for the next hour.

47 Loud Voice. The drinker is unable to speak in a whisper, and his speaking voice becomes louder than normal. Both effects last for the next hour.

48 Lisp. The imbiber speaks with a lisp until the effects wear off.

49 Sparks. Tiny sparks arc from the imbiber. The sparks do no damage to the imbiber or to any other creature, but a DM might rule that they impose a small circumstance penalty to skill checks in some social situations.

50 Distracted. The imbiber is easily distracted and influenced. For the next 10 minutes, the imbiber suffers a -1 penalty to all Will saving throws.

51 Cough. The drinker suffers from a distracting cough. For the next 10 minutes, the imbiber must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast a spell with verbal components. While the cough lasts, the imbiber suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to Move Silently skill checks.

52 Sharp Eyes. The imbiber gains low-light vision. This effect lasts only 1 minute.

53 Sweat. The imbiber begins to sweat profusely. The imbiber suffers no in-game effects, but a DM might rule that they impose a small circumstance penalty to skill checks in some social situations.

54 Repetition. For the next 5 minutes, the imbiber says everything twice.

55 Black Eyes. The imbiber's eyes turn completely black, including both pupils and irises. The change in eye color does not affect the imbiber's vision, but a DM might rule that this effect imposes a small circumstance penalty to skill checks in some social situations.

56 Long Fingernails. The drinker's fingernails stretch and curl. Although they do not affect weapon use or unarmed attacks, they look strange. The growth is permanent until the nails are cut.

57 Hair Growth. The imbiber's hair grows a foot in length. The growth is permanent until the hair is cut.

58 Twitchy. The imbiber becomes incapable of standing still for the next 10 minutes.

59 Sneer. The imbiber's upper lip curls into a sneer. The imbiber is incapable of making any other facial expression for the next hour. While the effect lasts, the imbiber suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to Bluff and Diplomacy skill checks.

60 Two Effects. The potion or spell has two effects. Roll twice on this list, or choose two effects.

JOIN THE ADVENTURE

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Golems are the prototypical construct, mainly because they can be tailor-made for a specific purpose. Since they lack Intelligence, they are best suited for sentry duty, guarding a particular location, or any other task that does not require reasoning. Their natural immunity to most forms of magic also makes them extremely difficult to destroy. Presented here are five new types of golems to keep your adventuring party on its toes.

by Eric Cagle · illustrated by Marc Sasso

Construct of Destruction

Five New GOLEMS

Forgotten Creations of Magic

WEB GOLEM

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 8d10 (44 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft. (can't run), climb 30 ft.
AC: 18 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 17
Attacks: Slam +10 melee, or bite +10 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+7, or bite 1d6+7 and poison
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Construct, adhesive, magic immunity, damage reduction 10/+1
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 13, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 9-12 HD (Large); 13-24 HD (Huge)

Almost a thousand years before the present age, the drow sorcerer Tritilian made a pact with the dark goddess Lolth in order to understand the mystery of spider silk. Although the pact inevitably drove him to destruction (he was devoured by driders while trying to capture several giant spiders), Tritilian gained incredible insight into how this amazing substance is created and how it can be manipulated to a remarkable degree. One of the most successful applications of these revelations was the creation of the first web golem.

The web golem has a humanoid-shaped body, entirely composed of thick layers of spider webbing. It stands roughly 9 feet tall, and despite the gossamer nature of the webbing, it weighs 500 pounds. The tensile strength of the web gives the golem impressive physical might.

The body is only a rough approximation of a humanoid form, with two arms, two legs, and a stumpy head, but little definition. The most disturbing aspects of the web golem are its facial features. When Tritilian created the first web golem, he included the eight multifaceted eyes and poisonous fangs of a giant spider. Because of the adhesive nature of the webs, the golem typically has bits and pieces of debris throughout its body. Numerous normal spiders also find the web golem an appealing place to live. The web golem cannot speak and gives off no discernable scent.

Combat

Appropriately, web golems can utilize many of the same tactics that a giant spider would. They are usually posted high on the ceiling, nestled among other spider webs, waiting for intruders.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the web golem is its facial structure.

Adhesive (Ex): The webbing that makes up a web golem is extremely sticky. A web golem automatically grapples any creature it hits with a slam attack. Such creatures cannot get free while the web golem functions without removing the web adhesive first. A web golem makes a free bite attack against any creature it grapples each round. While it grapples a creature, it can use its normal attack to deal bite or slam damage to the grappled creature, or it can attempt to attack another creature with a bite or slam attack. The web golem cannot grapple more than one creature at a time.

Fire or acid damage causes the web golem's adhesive ability to stop functioning for 1d4 rounds. When the web golem's adhesive ability fails, foes already grappled by a web golem can escape from the grapple normally (with a successful grapple or Escape Artist check). A web golem can release a grappled creature normally or not grapple a foe it strikes if it wishes.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): A web golem takes double damage from fire attacks unless a save is allowed for half damage. A successful save halves the damage, and a failure doubles it.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A web golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A *grease* spell slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw. While within the area of a *web* spell, a web golem gains fast healing 5.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 14); initial and secondary damage 1d6 Strength.

Construction

A web golem's body is made from layer upon layer of webbing harvested from giant spiders. Although it is possible to get enough webbing from a single sufficiently large giant spider, most assembly is done with the webbing of numerous monstrous spiders.

The golem costs 65,000 gp to create, including 1,000 for the construction of the body. Creating the body is a complex task that requires a successful Craft (weaving) or Profession (silkmaker) check (DC 20).The creator must be at least 14th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,100 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest, limited wish, poison, polymorph any object, spider climb,* and *web.*

ALCHEMICAL GOLEM

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 9d10 (49 hp)
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 18 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +10 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 18
Attacks: 2 slams +11 melee
Damage: Slam 2d8+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, rupture
Special Qualities: Acid and fire immunity, alchemical healing, construct, damage reduction 15/+1, immune to bludgeoning weapons, magic immunity
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 9, Con–, Int–, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 10
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 10-18 HD (Large); 19-27 HD (Huge)

The famed alchemist Brudel Whitestone was well known for creating a number of unique and beneficial items that served his liege, the Duke of Greston. Whitestone was sought out by scholars, sages, healers, sorcerers, and wizards for his insights about alchemy. Unknown to almost everyone, however, the alchemical substances that Whitestone created had severely damaged his brain. Plagued by bouts of seizures and psychotic episodes, the alchemist came to the conclusion that he was going insane. In an effort to save all the discoveries he had found during his lifetime, Whitestone began crafting a "container" in which to hold all of the various ingredients that he had made. His assistants, who had long ago learned not to question their master, noticed early on that the container was roughly in the shape of a man and could only guess what Whitestone's true purpose was.

Night after night, the mad alchemist poured a variety of toxic substances into a tough membrane that he had created. Then, after completely filling the membrane and sealing it off, the alchemist said a few cryptic words, and it came to life. The first act of the golem was to reach out and snap the neck of its creator, who stood perfectly still while the hand reached out. Since then, other alchemists have managed to decipher the gibberish that made up Whitestone's notes on the creation of the alchemical golem, and some have been able to duplicate his efforts.

An alchemical golem is 9 feet tall and weighs 800 pounds. The body is composed of a single tough, transparent membrane in the shape of a humanoid, with the face usually mimicking the appearance of its creator. Inside the membrane is a swirling collection of toxic, oily substances that merge and separate at random, giving the creature life. The alchemical golem wears no clothing, has no possessions, and is incapable of speech. Despite the membrane that keeps the ingredients inside, the golem gives off a faint, acrid smell.

Combat

Alchemical golems are particularly dangerous opponents, because although they are slow and ponderous, the mere act of damaging it releases toxic substances that burn the skin and choke the lungs. Anyone considering attacking an alchemical golem would be advised to do so at a distance.

Alchemical Healing (Ex): An alchemical golem does not heal normally, but it can drink alchemical liquids to heal itself. For every 10 gp worth of alchemical liquid (such as alchemist's fire, antitoxin, or acid) the alchemical golem drinks, it heals 1 point of damage. An alchemical golem has no ability to discern what is an appropriate liquid to drink, so the alchemical golem's creator must command it to drink the appropriate liquids or provide it with precise commands and a ready supply. An alchemical golem that drinks other liquids (such as poisons, potions, and alcohol) is not harmed and gains no benefit from drinking them; the liquids are mixed with the alchemical liquids inside the golem and destroyed.

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, the alchemical golem can breath a 30-foot cone of acid and toxic fumes. Creatures in the area suffer 5d6 points of acid damage (Reflex half DC 14) and 1d4 points of Constitution damage (Fortitude negates DC 14).

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Immune to Bludgeoning Weapons (Ex): Bludgeoning weapons, even enchanted ones, deal no damage to an alchemical golem, bouncing off the rubbery membrane that contains its alchemical fluids.

Magic Immunity (Ex): An alchemical golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A *neutralize poison* spell slows the golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.

Rupture (Ex): Any attack with a piercing or slashing weapon that does at least 10 points of damage in a single hit (beyond damage reduction), punctures the alchemical golem's membrane. This puncture wound releases a spray of burning liquid and noxious fumes into the nearest 5-foot square in the direction from which the attack originated. Creatures in that square suffer 2d6 points of fire damage (Reflex half DC 14) and 1d4 points of Constitution damage (Fortitude negates DC 14).

When the alchemical golem is reduced to 0 hit points, the alchemical golem's membrane collapses, spilling out all the remaining liquids inside. The resulting splash acts as a 15-foot-radius burst of acid, flame, and deadly gas that deals 10d6 points of damage, half of which is acid damage and half of which is fire damage (Reflex save [DC 14] halves damage resulting in equal damage from both acid and fire), and 2d6 points of Constitution damage (Fortitude half DC 14).

Construction

An alchemical golem's body is made from a noxious and complex series of alchemical liquids poured into a tough humanoid-shaped membrane. The golem costs 70,000 gp to create, including 2,000 for the construction of the body. Creating the body is a complex task that requires a successful Alchemy check (DC 20).

The creator must be at least 14th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 2,800 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest, limited wish, poison, polymorph any object,* and *protection from elements.*

MUD GOLEM

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 13d10 (71 hp)
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run), swim 20 ft.
AC: 21 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 21
Attacks: 2 slams +14 melee
Damage: Slam 2d10+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, engulf
Special Qualities: Construct, damage reduction 20/+2, immune to piercing and slashing weapons, magic immunity
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 10
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 14-20 HD (Large); 21-39 HD (Huge)

Mud golems were first seen by bands of primitive humans who lived along the edge of an enormous swamp. Numerous clans of lizardfolk claimed the swamp as their ancestral home, and they defended it against the humans with a terrible ferocity. A leader among the human barbarians

emerged and urged his people into striking into the lizardfolk's territory. The first wave caught many lizardfolk settlements off-guard, and the humans enjoyed several early victories. Over time, however, the humans' scouts began to bring back stories of dangerous, towering monsters that rose from the mud. Dismissing these reports as superstition, the barbarians continued their attacks.

Before getting too much farther into the swamps, the army was suddenly attacked by a dozen or more golems that seemed to be made entirely of mud. Unable to stop the rampaging monsters, the army broke and tried to flee out of the swamp. However, the mud golems ambushed the lone stragglers, until only a few barbarians remained to retell the story.

The human scouts began to bring back stories of dangerous, towering monsters that rose from the mud.

Mud golems are large, anthropomorphic creatures composed entirely of slippery mud. They are hulking figures with crudely shaped limbs that stand 10 feet tall and weigh 600 pounds. Their faces are plain, with a simple slash for a mouth and two eye sockets that are just scooped out holes—dim glowing red spheres burn in the sockets.

Combat

Mud golems fight best from areas of mud where they can bury themselves in the muck to strike opponents from surprise. Shuffling on to more solid ground when necessary, a mud golem attempts to blind and slow foes with its mud spray and then engulf them.

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds of combat, a mud golem can spray slippery mud in a 15-foot cone as a free action. This spray deals no damage, but any creature within the area that fails a Reflex save (DC 16) is blinded for 1 round. In addition, this mud is very slippery. Any creature moving in the affected area must make a Balance check (DC 16) or fall prone. The mud remains slippery for 1 hour before it dries out. Mud golems are immune to the blinding and slippery effects of their own and other mud golems' breath weapons.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Engulf (Ex): If a mud golem successfully grapples a creature of a smaller size category, it engulfs it with its mass. While engulfed, there is a chance the opponent will begin to drown (see The Drowning Rule, Chapter 3: Running the Game, in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). An engulfed character must make a Constitution check (DC 20) to successfully hold his breath before being engulfed.

While engulfed, the character cannot attack the mud golem, cast a spell, or use any supernatural or spell-like ability. The all-encompassing mud and the magic-proof nature of the golem make such efforts futile. The engulfed creature must succeed at an opposed grapple or Escape Artist check (against the mud golem's +18 grapple check). The mud golem can engulf one Medium-sized or two Small opponents at a time. A mud golem does not count as grappled for having engulfed creatures within it.

Immune to Piercing and Slashing Weapons (Ex): Piercing and slashing weapons, even enchanted ones, deal no damage to a mud golem.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A mud golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A *transmute mud to rock* spell slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw, while *transmute rock to mud* heals all its lost hit points. A *stone to flesh* spell does not change the golem's structure, but it negates its damage reduction and immunity to piercing and slashing weapons for 1 round.

Construction

Rare constructs, mud golems are created by spellcasters with large quantities of mud at hand. Found almost exclusively near rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, and cisterns, creatures that live in such areas most commonly create mud golems. A mud golem's body is made from special mud found in magically charged areas or created through magical means. The golem costs 55,000 gp to create, including 1,000 for the construction of the body. Creating the body is a complex task that requires a successful Craft (sculpting or pottery) check (DC 20). The creator must be at least 14th level and able to cast divine spells. Completing the ritual drains 2,200 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest, limited wish, polymorph any object,* and *transmute rock to mud.*

ROPE GOLEM

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 16d10 (88 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft. (can't run)
AC: 27 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +16 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 25
Attacks: 2 slams +21 melee
Damage: Slam 2d8+10
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict, improved grab, rope whirlwind, strangle
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 40/+3, fire vulnerability, unravel
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 30, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 12
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 17-23 (Large); 24-49 HD (Huge)

Also called hangman golems, rope golems are composed of numerous ropes that are twisted and wrapped into the shape of a humanoid figure. Standing almost twice the height of a normal human, the rope golem's face is only a rough outline, with two pure white globs of energy burning where the eyes would be. A rope golem cannot speak, but it expresses acknowledgement of commands with the twisting of ropes.

Combat

A rope golem is a ferocious combatant that tries to get in close with opponents before unleashing its rope whirlwind. If it is guarding a location or object, it typically unravels itself, appearing like a long-disused rope.

Constrict (Ex): With a successful grapple check, a rope golem can crush a grabbed opponent, dealing 2d8+15 points of bludgeoning damage.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): A rope golem takes double damage from fire attacks unless a save is allowed for half damage. A successful save halves the damage and a failure doubles it.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a rope golem hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a slam attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity (grapple bonus +25). If it gets a hold, it also constricts on the same round. Thereafter, the rope golem has the option to conduct the grapple normally or simply use its ropes to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the rope golem is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals constrict damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A rope golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. *Animate rope* causes 1d8 points of damage. A *mending* spell heals the rope golem of 2d8 points of damage.

Rope Whirlwind (Ex): The rope golem can extend a number of ropes and begin to spin, flailing everything in a 10-foot radius. Hits are resolved as slam attacks that do not allow the rope golem to use its improved grab ability. This does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and the rope golem can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.

Strangle (Ex): When the rope golem grapples a living opponent, it can make a strangle attack as an attack action against the foe it grapples. The rope golem and its foe make an opposed grapple check (or the foe can oppose with an Escape Artist check). If the rope golem exceeds the foe's grapple check by 10 or more, it squeezes the breath from that opponent, suffocating the creature in addition to dealing constrict damage. The strangled creature immediately drops to 0 hit points after suffering constrict damage. On the following rounds, the rope golem can continue to suffocate the creature as a free action that requires no grapple check so long as the creature does not somehow escape the grapple. This causes the creature to drop to -1 hit points on the second round of suffocation and -10 on the third. When a rope golem grapples an unconscious creature (such as one that is being suffocated) it does not count as grappled and can make attacks and move about normally.

Unravel (Ex): Once per day, as a standard action, a rope golem can unravel its form to become a heap of tangled ropes that fills a 10-foot-by-10-foot area. While in this form, the rope golem cannot attack or move, but it gains fast healing 5. The rope golem can reform into its humanoid appearance as a full-round action.

Construction

A rope golem's body is crafted from numerous magically treated ropes. The golem costs 90,000 gp to create, which includes 1,250 gp for the construction of the body. Creating the body is a complex task that requires a successful Use Rope check (DC 20). The creator must be at least 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 2,400 XP from the creator and requires *animate rope, geas/quest, limited wish,* and *polymorph any object.*

PUZZLE GOLEM

Complete Puzzle Golem
Large Construct
Hit Dice: 16d10 (88 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 24 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +16 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 24
Attacks: 2 slams +19 melee
Damage: Slam 2d8+8
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, split, rebuild, damage reduction 25/+2
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5
Abilities: Str 27, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Medium-Size Puzzle Piece

Medium-Size Construct
Hit Dice: 8d10 (44 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 24 (+14 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 24
Attacks: 2 slams +10 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, split, rejoin, rebuild, damage reduction 25/+2
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 11, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Small Puzzle Piece

Small Construct
Hit Dice: 4d10 (22 hp)
Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 26 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +14 natural)
Attacks: 2 slams +6 melee
Damage: Slam 1d8+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, split, rejoin, rebuild, damage reduction 25/+2
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Tiny Puzzle Piece

Tiny Construct
Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 28 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +14 natural)
Attacks: 2 slams +3 melee
Damage: Slam 1d6
Face/Reach: 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunity, rejoin, rebuild, damage reduction 25/+2
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 15, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 12
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 17-20 HD (Huge)

Once Upon A Time

The Storytelling Card Game

Created by Richard Lambert, Andrew Rilstone and James Wallis
Artwork by Florence Magnin and Sophie Mounier

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A puzzle golem is a specialized (and more expensive) version of the standard stone golem. A single puzzle golem is actually comprised of eight tiny golems, called "pieces" by the creator. These individual pieces look like a cross between an anthropomorphic figure and a three-dimensional puzzle piece. These pieces fit tightly with the other pieces, leaving only a tiny seam between each one. With all of the pieces together, the puzzle golem is a towering and imposing figure and is as powerful as a normal stone golem.

Puzzle golems serve the same purpose as any other golem, usually acting as sentries or bodyguards for powerful wizards or sorcerers.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex): A puzzle golem (including each of its smaller forms) is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A *transmute rock to mud* spell slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.

. . . the puzzle golem can handle multiple opponents or swarm and pulverize a single foe.

Combat

Like other golems, puzzle golems are direct and single-minded in combat. The golem's creator gives commands as to when the puzzle golem should split and rejoin. Typically, in the first round, the puzzle golem remains in its largest form. After that, it breaks down into smaller individuals. With this tactic, the puzzle golem can handle multiple opponents or swarm and pulverize a single foe. Small and Tiny pieces try to grapple a single foe and aid the attacks of a larger piece, while the larger piece hammers away on the opponent.

If a single piece sustains half or more of its hit points in damage, it immediately tries to rejoin with another piece of equal size in order to regenerate (see below). If individual pieces, but not the entire golem, are destroyed in combat, award XP based on the size of the piece: a Medium-sized piece is worth half the XP, a Small-sized piece is worth one-quarter XP, and a Tiny-sized piece is worth one-eighth the XP.

Split (Ex): As a standard action, the puzzle golem can split into smaller golems, called "pieces." The complete, Large puzzle golem can split into two Medium-size pieces. A single Medium-size piece can split into two Small pieces. A single Small piece can split into two Tiny pieces. Tiny pieces cannot split into smaller pieces.

When split, each piece acts independently and uses the statistics for the appropriate size. A single piece will not voluntarily move more than 50 feet from another piece. If it finds itself beyond 50 feet from another piece, it moves toward another piece as its action. A piece cannot split if there is insufficient space for it to do so. Pieces do not have to split all at once—a Medium-size piece can split into two Small pieces, while the other Medium-size piece can remain at Medium size. The golem can remain in any form indefinitely, but it usually tries to assemble into its Large form after a battle is complete.

Rejoin (Ex): If a piece is within 5 feet of another piece of equal size, the two can merge together to create a single piece that is one size category larger. As a standard action, one of the pieces rejoins with the other, which must not move but can be in combat. Joining together creates a single larger piece with full hit points and none of the spells or effects (such as *transmute rock to mud*) that either piece had on it before rejoining.

To rejoin, a piece must combine with another piece of equal size. If a puzzle golem has a single Tiny piece destroyed, it can no longer rejoin to Large-size, because it lacks a required piece. If a piece is destroyed, every smaller piece that it is composed of is also destroyed.

Rebuild (Su): A puzzle golem can rebuild pieces that have been destroyed so long as the following criteria are met: it has access to a pile of stone equal in size to its starting form, there is at least one piece remaining, and it is within sight of the "ruined" pieces. A single Tiny piece can be rebuilt in one day and will then stand inert until it can be rejoined with a companion piece of equal size. The puzzle golem only rebuilds enough pieces to restore itself back to working condition—it cannot create "backup" pieces or an entirely new Large puzzle golem. Like with splitting and rejoining, a puzzle golem does this only under the direct command of its creator or when given explicit commands to do so when left alone.

The *transmute mud to rock* spell heals all of its lost hit points. A *stone to flesh* spell does not actually change the golem's structure, but it negates its damage reduction for 1 round. Each of these effects is negated (except for any hit points gained from a *transmute mud to rock* spell) if a piece of equal size rejoins with the affected piece.

Construction

A puzzle golem's body is actually eight separate pieces, each of which is carved from a single block of hard stone, such as granite, weighting at least 4,000 pounds. The golem costs 95,000 gp to create, which includes 1,000 gp for the stone. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (sculpting or masonry) check (DC 25). Despite being multiple pieces, the assembler need only make a single Craft check. The creator must be at least 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 3,800 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest, limited wish, polymorph any object,* and *mending.*

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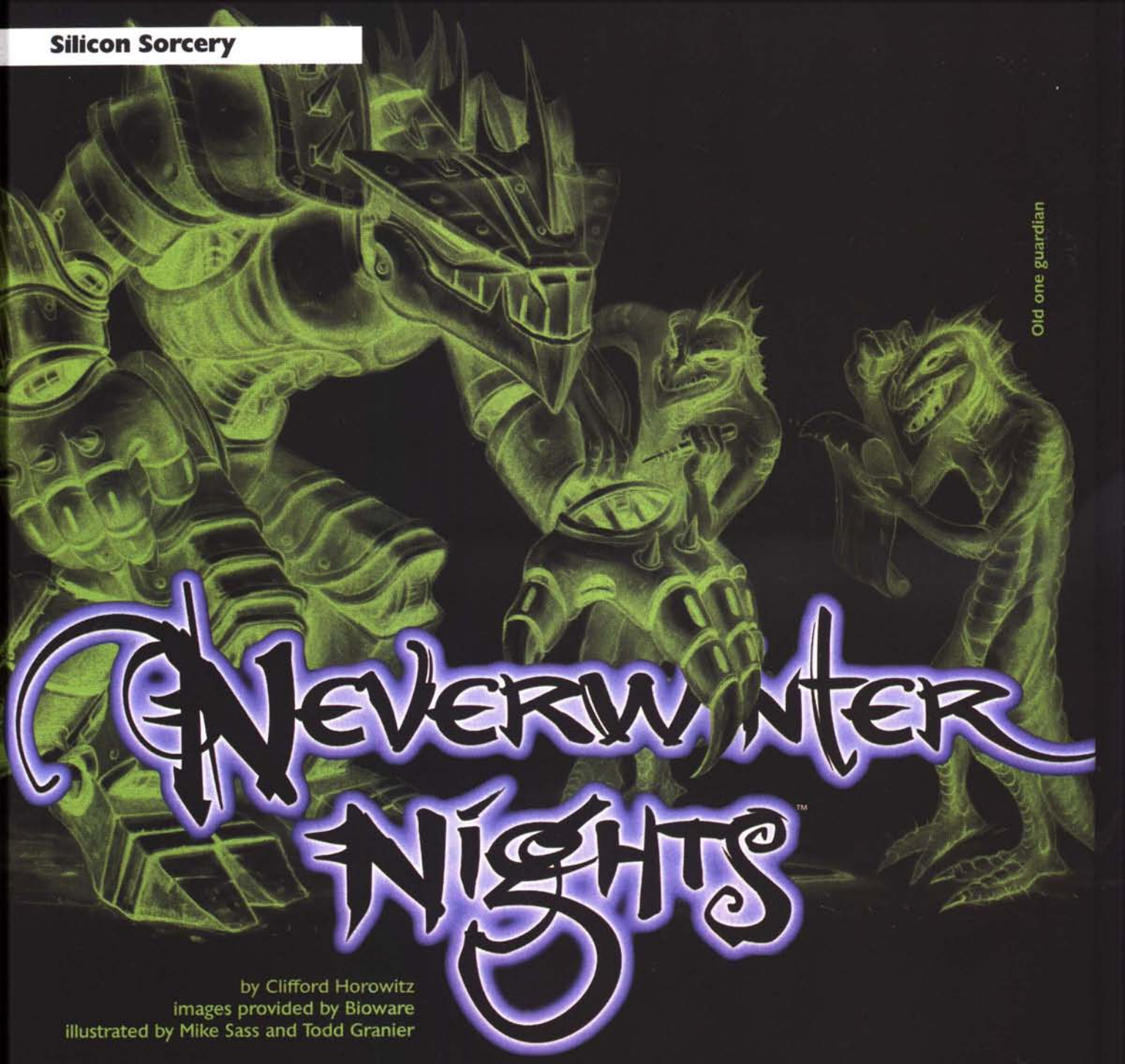


Neverwinter Nights™

by Clifford Horowitz
images provided by Bioware
illustrated by Mike Sass and Todd Granier

Neverwinter Nights is a big game, and aside from meaning hundreds of hours of play, that also means that there is a wealth of material that can be gleaned from it. Among the new opponents found in the game are new kinds of constructs, and while these walking automatons are most often set up as formidable gate guards, there are no such limitations in your tabletop campaign. In addition to providing new and challenging opposition for your PCs, the constructs presented in this article can create opportunities for new plot threads and hints about lost history.

GLYPH GUARDIAN

Glyph guardians, also known as seal guardians or portal guardians, are golems with a wide variety of body types. Created to guard a doorway or passage and mystically bound to the area in the process, glyph guardians are constructed from a variety of materials. Most are stone, a number are wooden, and clay and iron glyph guardians are not unheard of. Regardless of the materials used in their creations, all glyph guardians have one thing in common—their writings.

Arcane runes scrawl their way across the glyph guardian's body and blaze with intense mystical energy. This is the mark of a glyph guardian and the true substance of their form, for glyph guardians are nothing less than a collection of arcane glyphs bound to a golem. Mystical rituals infuse the construct with energies normally reserved for doors and lids and in the process make the golem an animated extension of the portal it guards.

Glyph guardians trade mobility for power. The process of transforming a regular golem into a glyph guardian changes the nature of the construct, making it a part of the area it is set to guard and thus capable of receiving

certain enchantments that can only normally be applied to immobile structures. Within their protected area, glyph golems are an overwhelming opponent, but they are powerless to leave their protectorate, and no force can remove them.

Creating a Glyph Guardian

"Glyph guardian" is a template that can be applied to any golem (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). It uses all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Special Attacks: A glyph guardian retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains those listed below. Unless otherwise noted, the save DC for these attacks is 10 + half the glyph guardian's HD.

Bursting Blow (Su): All the glyph guardian's natural attacks deal +1d6 points of acid, air, cold, fire, or sonic damage as chosen by the glyph guardian's creator at the time the golem is made into a glyph guardian. On a successful critical hit, a natural attack instead deals +1d10 points of the appropriate energy damage.

Ghost Touch (Su): A glyph guardian's natural attacks function as ghost touch weapons.

Guardian Ray (Su): As part of the creation ritual, the glyph guardian is given the ability to fire a ray at foes. This ray has a range of 100 feet and requires a ranged touch attack to hit the foe. The ray can take one of three forms as chosen by the glyph guardian's creator at the time the golem is made into a glyph guardian:

Fire Ray—A scarlet beam of pure heat blasts the interloper for 7d6 points of fire damage. In addition, the creature struck suffers effects identical to a *heat metal* spell and must succeed at Will saving throws to negate the effect for the metal objects it carries.

Cold Ray—A silvery blue beam that crackles like breaking ice and frosts the air to visibility along its length streaks out to the trespasser for 7d6 points of cold damage. In addition, the creature struck suffers effects identical to a *chill metal* spell and must succeed at Will saving throws to negate the effect for the metal objects it carries.

Necromantic Ray—A beam the color of clotted blood snaps out to lash the intruder for 7d6 points of damage due to negative energy. Undead are healed by this attack instead of damaged. In addition, the creature struck suffers the effects of a *ghoul touch* spell for 7 rounds unless it succeeds at a Fortitude saving throw.

Stasis Blow (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, some of the glyphs on the glyph guardian's body activate, and a serpent of amber energy forms around one of the glyph guardian's natural attacks. If the glyph guardian makes a successful melee attack roll or melee touch attack, the opponent must succeed at a Fortitude save or be caught in a stasis field for 1d4 days as per *sepia snake sigil*. Many glyph guardians are commanded to ignore creatures contained in the amber stasis field a glyph guardian's stasis blow imparts; this allows their creators to deal with intruders and other foes as they please.

Special Qualities: The glyph guardian retains all special qualities of the base creature and gains those listed below.

True Sight (Su): A glyph guardian sees all things as they are. This ability functions as the divine version of *true seeing* with a range of 60 feet. A glyph guardian always sees into the Ethereal Plane.

Bonded Area (Ex): The glyph guardian is mystically made a part of its guardian domain and as such is physically incapable of leaving it. The DM must define this area before the encounter begins. This area could be as small as a single room or as large as an entire castle complex, but it can be no larger than an area that can be encompassed in a 1,000-foot-diameter sphere.

The glyph guardian cannot step out of its bonded area for any reason, nor can it be forcibly removed by any magical means; all such attempts fail. Not even the glyph guardian's creator can order it beyond the area it was created to guard. It is possible to use physical means, such as pushing the glyph guardian out of the area, but the glyph guardian teleports (see below) or simply walks back in as soon as it is able if it cannot use its teleport ability. Should it be impossible for it to enter or stay in the bonded area (the room it was bonded to is filled with stone, the floor has been replaced by a pit, and so on) the glyph guardian loses the glyph guardian template and becomes a normal golem under the command of its creator.

Erase Vulnerability (Ex): Although most glyph guardians boast an impressive resistance to spells and damaging magic, their source of additional power is also the source of another weakness. Vital components of a glyph guardian's magical writings are susceptible to the *erase* spell, just like certain magical glyphs are. Targeting the glyph guardian with this spell automatically inflicts 5d6 points of damage and prevents it from using all of the supernatural special attacks and supernatural special qualities derived from this template for 1d6 rounds.

Teleport Without Error (Su): The glyph guardian can teleport itself, its creator, and up to 50 pounds of objects anywhere within its bonded area without a chance for error. Using this ability is a move-equivalent action for the glyph guardian. It must be touching its creator to teleport its creator.

Saves: Same as base creature
Abilities: Same as base creature
Skills: Same as base creature
Feats: Same as base creature

Climate/Terrain: Same as base creature
Organization: Same as base creature
Challenge Rating: As the base creature +3
Treasure: Same as base creature
Alignment: Same as base creature
Advancement: Same as base creature

Construction

To create a glyph guardian, the creator must first meet all the requirements for creating the base creature. After all requirements for the golem are met, the creator must invest an additional 40,000 gp for mystical warding materials, which may not be reused. The creator must be at least 14th level. Creation drains an additional 1,600 XP and requires the Craft Wondrous Item feat, *dimensional anchor, explosive runes, glyph of warding, sepia snake sigil,* and *teleport without error.*

OLD ONE GUARDIAN

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 16d10 (88 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft. (can't run)
AC: 32 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +22 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 31
Attacks: 2 slams +20 melee
Damage: Slam 2d10+9
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Twin storm

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Monsters, especially unintelligent constructs, can present a challenge to players who like the idea of the creature and want to incorporate it into their character's history. If you find the idea of any of these creatures intriguing, you might try tying your character to the creature in a number of ways:

- Powerful spellcasters can create these creatures. Your character might aspire to create one of her own.
- If you come from a family of spellcasters, one of these creatures could be a faithful family servant. Inheriting powerful magical heirlooms is a staple of fantasy; perhaps control of a golem might be passed onto you as a kind of inheritance.
- The minogon requires minotaur hearts for its creation, but perhaps an evil sorcerer has developed a way to use a more readily available component, such as the hearts of barbarians. Your character might have sworn a vendetta against this evil sorcerer for crimes against your tribe, or perhaps the sorcerer seeks your character's heart to complete his creation.

Special Qualities: Construct, flame shield, magic immunities, damage reduction 50/+3, rust vulnerability
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +6
Abilities: Str 29, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 14
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 17-22 HD (Large), 23-48 HD (Huge)

The old one guardian golems are constructs most often found in ruins and tombs, guarding inner sanctums of forgotten places. They look similar to iron golems, but the metalsmithing of their bodies appears more delicate and fine than most. Older examples of this type of construct commonly appear as stocky reptilian humanoids with thick plated armor. Although not pulsing with mystical energy like glyph guardians, old one guardians still brim with it, as evidenced by their impressive array of combat abilities.

First created in an age long since forgotten, the old one guardians are the legacy of the old ones, a near-mythical race of lizard-like humanoids who ruled the world long before humans, dwarves, or elves came to prominence. The losers in a battle for world domination, the old ones vanished from Toril, leaving scant evidence that they ever existed. The recent discovery of active old one guardians leads some sages to fear that the old ones might also return to the world. For more information on the old ones, check out next month's "Silicon Sorcery."

Battle Horror

Combat

Old one guardians are straightforward in combat, closing for melee and pummeling opponents until none remain. They rely on their strong defenses to protect them from the attacks of opportunity they generate as they move through the battlefield with impunity. If heavily damaged, they often resort to using their twin storm ability as a primary attack, allowing them to damage large areas and heal themselves at the same time.

Flame Shield (Su): An old one guardian golem can cause its body to be wreathed in multihued flame. Creatures grappling the old one guardian or touching it with a natural or hand-held weapon suffer 6d6 points of either fire or cold damage (assign damage type randomly with each instance of damage). While using its flame shield ability, an old one guardian is immune to fire and cold damage.

Twin Storm (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, an old one guardian can conjure an elemental storm of savage power to rain down around itself. This storm has a 20-foot radius and can be placed in any position so long as the old one guardian is within the area. Creatures within the area suffer 6d6 points of fire damage and 6d6 points of cold damage. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) halves both the cold damage and the fire damage.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Magic Immunities (Ex): An old one guardian is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A negative energy effect slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw. A fire or cold effect breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and cures 1 point of damage for

each 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. For example, an old one guardian hit by a *fireball* cast by a 5th-level wizard gains back 6 hit points if the damage total is 18. The golem makes no saving throws against fire or cold effects, and its twin storm ability can be used to heal itself.

Rust Vulnerability (Ex): An old one guardian is affected normally by rust attacks, such as the attack of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell.

Construction

An old one guardian golem is sculpted from 5,000 pounds of pure iron. The golem costs 120,000 gp to create, which includes 1,500 gp for the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (armorsmithing or weaponsmithing) check (DC 25). The creator must be at least 16th level and be able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 4,800 XP from the creator and requires the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat, *fire shield, fire storm, ice storm, geas/quest, limited wish,* and *polymorph any object.*

BATTLE HORROR

Medium-Size Construct
Hit Dice: 14d10 (77 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft. fly (perfect)
AC: 23 (+2 Dex, +11 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 21
Attacks: Greatsword +17/+12 melee, or slam +17 melee, or mighty longbow +12/+7 ranged
Damage: Greatsword 2d6+10 and weapon power, or slam 1d4+10, or longbow 1d8+7 and weapon power
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Weapon power
Special Qualities: Construct, hardness, luminous, see invisibility
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7
Abilities: Str 24, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 16, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Treasure: Standard items, no goods, no coins
Alignment: Always neutral
Challenge Rating: 11
Advancement: 15-25 HD (Medium-size)

Any onlooker knows a battle horror is a construct of magic. It appears as the helmet, torso, and arms of a suit of plate armor suffused with glowing energy floating just above a sphere of roiling, luminous force. The upper body balances steadily on this sphere, and the result is a surprisingly mobile opponent. While a battle horror might wield any melee or ranged weapon, many carry a greatsword.

An improved version of the famed helmed horrors (see *Monsters of Faerûn*), the rarer battle horrors are constructs that have outlived their ancient creators. Constructed in a time when magic was both more plentiful and more powerful, battle horrors continue to execute their creator's last command whether it was to attack a particular type of foe or guard an area against intrusion. Some sages speculate that these creatures can form spontaneously in any area heavily suffused with magic gone awry, but others suspect that such instances of new battle horrors are due to a spellcaster learning the secrets of their creation.

Combat

Battle horrors wade into combat without great heed to personal safety, relying on their innate toughness and mobility to carry them. Many battle horrors are found near trapped corridors and rooms, where pressure plates await land-bound combatants. Battle horrors can also be found posted near the ceilings of rooms and in other high elevations; few opponents expect something so cumbersome as a construct to be lurking in the rafters.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Hardness (Ex): Battle horrors have a hardness of 10. This functions like the hardness of animated objects or the subject of a *statue* spell.

Luminous (Ex): The magical energy that powers a battle horror and gives it form produces light to a radius of 40 feet.

See Invisibility (Su): Battle horrors see invisible objects and beings naturally, as if they always benefited from the *see invisibility* spell.

Weapon Power (Su): A battle horror is created with the ability to imbue any melee or ranged weapon it wields with magic qualities. The magical properties operate only so long as the weapon remains in the battle horror's grasp. The battle horror's creator designs the construct with the properties the battle horror can imbue in its weapons at the time of creation. For a melee weapon, these properties can be any magic weapon special ability or combination of abilities of up to +4 enhancement chosen from Table 8–15: Melee Weapon Special Abilities in the *Dungeon Master's Guide.* For a ranged weapon, these properties can be any magic weapon special ability or combination of abilities of up to +4 enhancement chosen from Table 8–16:

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

Monsters like constructs can be very easy to import into your game because they lack the need for an ecological niche or a large population. Any dungeon could hide one of these constructs, or any one of them might be a unique creation of a villain the PCs face.

- All sorts of magical symbols and sigils are emblazoned on the body of a glyph guardian. Characters seeking information might be surprised to find that the information's guardian is also its keeper.
- An old one guardian might suddenly climb out of the sewers in pursuit of a group of outmatched adventurers or thieves. If the players help to defeat the construct, they might learn something about the treasure the construct was guarding.
- Someone might discover the means of creating the battle horror, and even better, the creation process is cheaper and easier than anyone imagined. When the constructs have become commonplace, they turn on their creators and anyone who shows magical might. Clearly the berserk constructs are a part of some plot, but whose, and what is their ultimate goal?
- The PCs might hear of a group of towns plagued by a tribe of minotaur barbarians lead by an unimaginably strong minotaur in plate armor. In truth, a powerful illusionist has tricked the usually reclusive minotaurs into raiding nearby settlements. Using a minogon to impress them and Illusion magic to deliver orders and demand tribute, the illusionist has convinced the dim-witted minotaurs that the minogon is their god.

Ranged Weapon Special Abilities in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

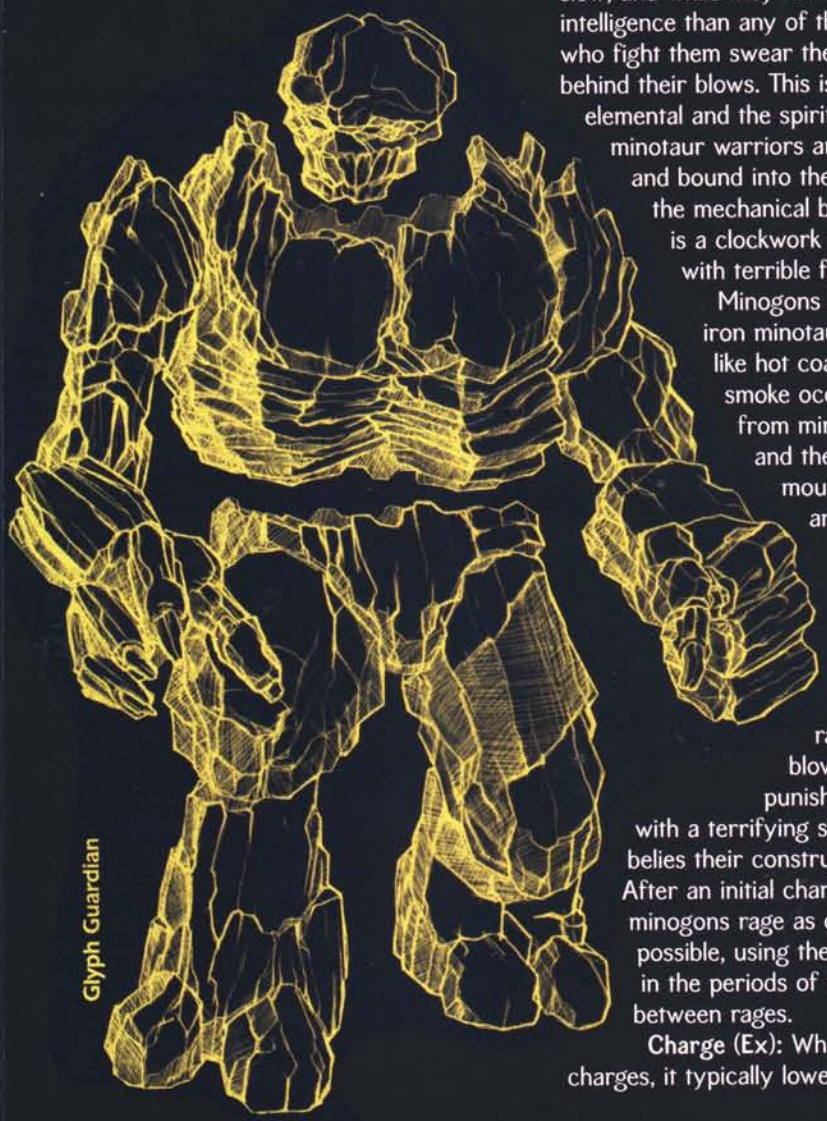
Construction

Creating a battle horror costs 90,000 gp, which includes the cost for a greatsword, mighty longbow, and plate armor. Assembling the body requires a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20). The creator must be at least 16th level and be able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 3,600 XP from the creator and requires the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat, *see invisibility, geas/quest, limited wish,* and *polymorph any object.* In addition, the spellcaster must meet the requirements for the magic weapon enhancements the battle horror will use.

MINOGON

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 11d10 (60 hp)
Initiative: +1 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 20 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +20 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 19
Attacks: Huge greataxe +14/+9 melee, or slam +14 melee
Damage: Huge greataxe 2d8+10, slam 1d6+10
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Charge, howl
Special Qualities: Construct, magic immunities, damage reduction 15/+1, rage
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Solitary or gang (2-4)
Challenge Rating: 10
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 12-16 HD (Large), 16-33 HD (Huge)



Glyph Guardian

Minogons are a unique type of golem. Although just as large as the common golems, they are neither ponderous nor slow, and while they have no more intelligence than any of their kin, those who fight them swear there is a passion behind their blows. This is because a fire elemental and the spirits of deceased minotaur warriors are summoned and bound into the fiery heart of the mechanical beast. The result is a clockwork beastman filled with terrible fury.

Minogons look like burly iron minotaurs with eyes like hot coals. Wisps of smoke occasionally waft from minogons' nostrils, and their empty mouths often groan and roar.

Combat

Minogons throw themselves into combat, raining down axe blow after punishing axe blow with a terrifying savagery that belies their constructed nature. After an initial charge into combat, minogons rage as often as possible, using their howl attacks in the periods of relative calm between rages.

Charge (Ex): When a minogon charges, it typically lowers its head and runs its opponent through on its wicked horns. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of charging, this ability grants the charging minogon a single gore attack (+14 melee) that deals 4d6+10 points of damage.

Construct: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Howl (Su): By bellowing unfettered rage into the air, the minogon makes its opponents aware of the terrible fury they face. All creatures within a 20-foot radius must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be stunned for 1 round. Minogons may howl once every 1d4 rounds.

Magic Immunities (Ex): Minogons are immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects except as follows. Cold-based effects end their rages and prevent them from raging for 1d10 rounds. Fire-based effects heal 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage they would otherwise deal. In addition, spells with the Fire descriptor *haste* minogons (as the spell) for 1d6 rounds.

Rage (Ex): Drawing on both the torrential nature of fire and the screaming anger of the ghostly spirits involved in its creation, the minogon may enter a berserk frenzy as a free action. During this frenzy, which lasts 4 rounds, the construct's strength increases by 4, granting it a +2 Strength bonus to hit with melee attacks and causing its slam or greataxe attacks to deal an extra 3 points of damage. There is no fatigue once the rage passes, but the minogon cannot rage again for 1d4 rounds.

Construction

The minogon's body is crafted from 4,000 pounds of iron. It costs 62,000 gp to create, which includes 1,200 gp for the cost of the body. Assembling the body requires a successful Craft (armorsmithing) check (DC 20). In addition, 5 minotaur hearts must be encased in the breast of the mechanical beast. The creator must be at least 14th level and be able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 2,480 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest, limited wish, polymorph any object,* and *summon monster IV.*

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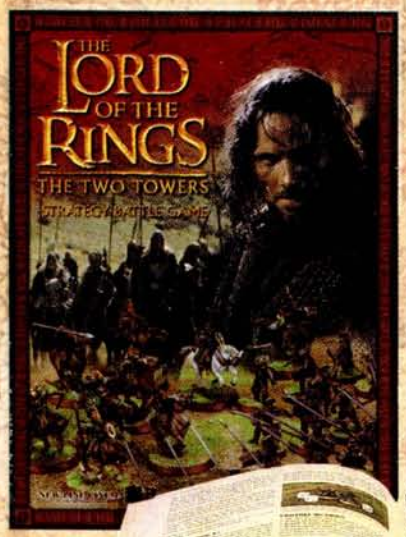

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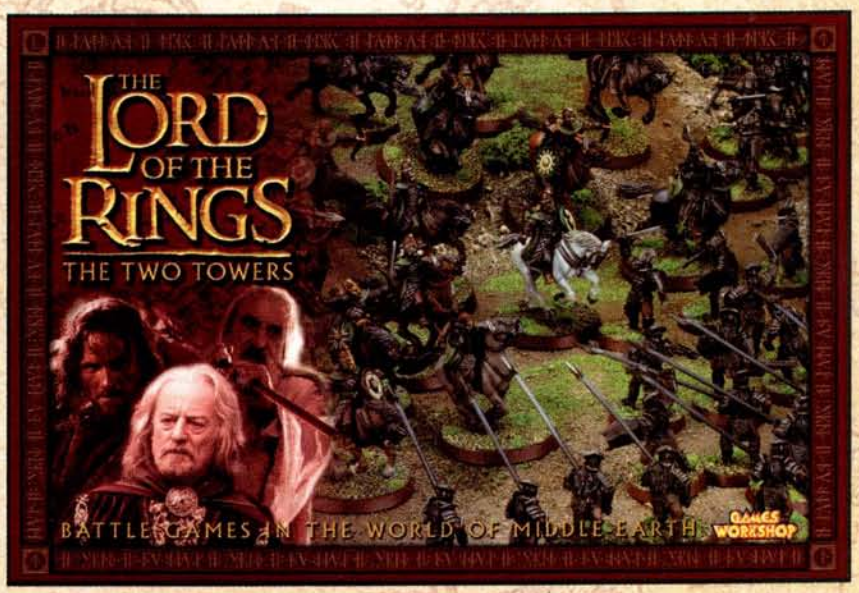

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ARCANE ARMOR

by Johnathan M. Richards · illustrated by Arnie Swekel

SECRET ITEMS FROM THE HALLS OF THE

MAGE-SMITHS

Imagine a character in a suit of armor. Chances are that your mind conjured up an image of a melee-minded character, or maybe even a divine spellcaster. Typically, we don't think of arcane spellcasters wearing armor, yet in the new edition of D&D, these spellcasters are allowed to do so. Sure, there's a price to pay for such a boon: The spellcaster runs the risk of spell failure for spells that require somatic gestures. Like most aspects of the new edition, this new option is balanced with a drawback to keep the class balanced. For the first time, an arcane spellcaster can weigh the advantages to the disadvantages and don armor if she so desires.

Now that such a thing is possible, it only makes sense that new types of magic armor would appear, built specifically for the arcane spellcaster. After all, who is it that creates all those wondrous magic items in the first place? That's right, spellcasters. You can bet that at least a few arcane spellcasters have begun experimenting with new types of magic armor devised with their own special needs in mind. Although created specifically for the arcane spellcaster, many of the items described in this article might be useful for characters other than wizards and sorcerers. While these items offer substantial protection, few are suits of armor in the traditional sense. Unless noted otherwise, they do not require an armor proficiency feat to use.

ARMOR OF HEALING

Armor of healing, or, as it is sometimes derogatorily referred to, masochist's armor, takes a completely different approach to the concept of armor. While traditional armor seeks to protect its wearer from damage, *armor of healing* seeks merely to "keep the wearer in the fight."

Armor of healing is made entirely of cloth (and thus has no arcane spell failure chance), takes up the wearer's vest slot, and provides no AC bonus. Instead, its magical cloth casts healing spells on its wearer any time the wearer takes damage. At the end of each round in which the wearer suffers damage, the *armor of healing* bestows a *cure light wounds* spell upon the wearer (curing 1d8+1 points of damage). Each such use of curative magic uses up one charge from the armor. *Armor of healing* is created with 50 charges and is

typically a joint effort between an arcane and a divine spellcaster.

The wearer of the *armor of healing* has no control over the rate at which the magical healing is provided; she cannot, for instance, use up 2 charges to cure 2d8+2 points of damage. Furthermore, the suit of armor can use only 1 charge per round: If the wearer takes 20 points of damage from multiple attacks in a given round, the *armor of healing* still only cures 1d8+1 points of damage at the end of that round. In addition, the healing is automatic and cannot be stopped. A wizard with 25 hit points who takes a single point of damage from a thrown dagger might not wish to waste a charge from her *armor of healing* but has no choice.

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *cure light wounds;* **Market Price:** 1,250 gp; **Cost to Create:** 625 gp + 50 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

FLAME ARMOR

Highly valued by arcane spellcasters, *flame armor* consists of merely a leather belt, two wristbands, and two ankle bands (note that the armor takes up 3 item slots: the belt slot, the bracers slot, and the boots slot). As its weight is negligible, *flame armor* does not hamper spellcasting efforts.

Once all five pieces are in place, the wearer need only voice the command word to activate the *flame armor's* primary effect: Instantly, magical flames engulf the wearer's body, enveloping him in a billowing mass of orange fire. The wearer suffers no harm from these flames; rather, they grant him a +3 deflection bonus to AC and provide the same level of protection as the *resist elements* spell, absorbing the first 12 points of fire damage each round. The flames provide light equivalent to a torch, illuminating everything within a 20-foot radius. The wearer sees normally in this light, even though his head is engulfed in the flames. Furthermore, while the flames do no harm to the wearer or anything the wearer touches normally, the flames are potentially dangerous to attackers. Any creature attacking a character wearing activated *flame armor* with its body or a hand-held weapon suffers 1d4 points of fire damage from a burst of flame that leaps from the wearer's body. A successful Reflex save (DC 20) halves the damage. This defensive property of the *flame armor* is automatic and does not count against the wearer's allotted actions each round.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *fire shield, mage armor, resist elements;* **Market Price:** 24,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 12,000 gp + 960 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

FOG ARMOR

Dubbed *fog armor,* this "armor" is housed in a magical amulet that can be activated for up to 50 minutes at a time, three times per day. Upon command, a thick gray fog billows out from the amulet, covering the wearer's body from head to toe and extending out to a radius of 5 feet. This fog grants the wearer the equivalent of one-half concealment (attacks against the wearer suffer a 20% miss chance within 5 feet and total concealment from foes farther away).

While encased in the magical fog, the wearer sees normally and can move around unhampered, as the fog moves along with her. Others looking into the swirling mists of the *fog armor* cannot make out details and can only occasionally glimpse the silhouette of the wearer hidden within. As the obscuring mists make it impossible to see through the whole cloud, the armor not only protects the wearer but can help block her companions from view as well.

In addition to the effects noted above, once per day the wearer can assume *gaseous form* at will for up to 10 minutes. This ability can only be used while the *fog armor* is activated, and the time spent in *gaseous form* still counts against the *fog armor's* 50-minute time limit. While in gaseous form, the 5-foot radius of fog continues to surround the character. All gear worn and carried by the wearer becomes insubstantial along with her body, and upon returning to physical form, the *fog armor* remains activated (provided the 50 minutes haven't elapsed). To deactivate the *fog armor,* the wearer simply repeats the command word.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *gaseous form, fog cloud;* **Market Price:** 119,228 gp; **Cost to Create:** 59,614 gp + 4,769 XP; **Weight:** —.

LIQUID ARMOR

Liquid armor, as the name implies, offers the protection of armor in liquid form. One dose of *liquid armor* protects any recipient. It has the consistency of a thick lotion and the unwanted side effect of turning the user's skin bright blue.

Rubbing *liquid armor* onto oneself is a standard action. Once applied, *liquid armor* grants the wearer a +4 armor bonus to AC for 1 hour. Another dose can be rubbed onto the body before the old dose dissipates fully, but this merely extends the effects of the armor for another hour; multiple applications of liquid armor don't stack.

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, *mage armor;* **Market Price:** 50 gp; **Cost to Create:** 25 gp + 2 XP; **Weight**—.

RETRACTABLE ARMOR

The benefits of wearing armor are obvious: Armor offers protection against the weapon-strikes of one's enemies. To an arcane spellcaster, the disadvantages are equally obvious: Any use of armor during spellcasting is potentially disruptive, possibly causing a spell to fail. *Retractable armor* is an attemptsto capture the best of both worlds, offering armor protection when the arcane spellcaster is not actively spellcasting and doing away with the armor when she is.

Retractable armor is the somewhat unconventional name for a magic belt. When the belt is worn over a suit of armor and the command word is spoken, the armor vanishes into an extradimensional space. The belt can hold only one suit of armor at a time. At any time after the armor is thus stowed in the extradimensional space, a creature wearing the belt can speak the command word, causing the armor to instantaneously appear on its body as though donned. If the creature is of an inappropriate size or shape to wear the armor (and the armor is not magical), or the creature is already wearing armor at the time, the armor stowed in the extradimensional space appears in the nearest unoccupied square.

If *retractable armor* is placed into a *bag of holding,* a *portable hole,* or any similar device, it opens a gate to the Astral Plane: Any creatures within a 10-foot radius are drawn there, and the *retractable armor* and the item it was placed into are destroyed.

Obviously, *Retractable armor* can provide great benefit to an arcane spellcaster, allowing her to move about

in her protective armor all day, shunting it away when she is about to cast some important spells she wants to ensure don't fail. Optionally, the character might prefer going unarmored for most of the day, activating the *retractable armor* only once her spell repertoire has been depleted and spell failure is no longer a concern.

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wonderous Item, *Leomund's secret chest, vanish;* **Market Price:** 4,400 gp; **Cost to Create:** 2,200 gp + 176 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

RETRIBUTION ARMOR

Retribution armor is actually an amulet worn on a chain about the neck that provides a simple +2 armor bonus to AC. In addition, when a wizard who is wearing *retribution armor* suffers damage from a melee attack made with a natural or hand-held weapon, the damage is divided equally between the attacker and the target. If the damage is an odd number, the extra point of damage goes to the attacker.

The amulet inflicts the same types of wounds upon the attacker that the wearer receives. For example, a rogue who uses a dagger to stab a wearer of *retribution armor* would receive an identical gash in the same spot as the wearer's. Many attackers quickly realize the properties of the strong magic engulfing their target after landing only a couple of attacks and seek easier targets.

Retribution armor functions as long as the amulet is worn; it needs no command word for activation.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *shield other;* **Market Price:** 140,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 70,000 gp + 5,600 XP; **Weight:** —.

STALAGMITE ARMOR

The term "armor" might be somewhat misleading with this item, but nonetheless the name *stalagmite armor* has stuck. The item is actually a long leather cape with a mottled gray pattern that resembles marble. Upon command, the wearer can convert the armor to a hollow stone stalagmite. To do so, he pulls his arms within the cape and speaks the command word. This transforms the armor into a conical slab of stone with a hollow center, inside which the wearer is hidden. At this point, the wearer is no longer "wearing" the *stalagmite armor* so much as hiding within it. From the outside, the wearer is now indistinguishable from a common stalagmite.

In its stone form, the *stalagmite armor* provides complete cover to the wearer. He is completely impervious to the effects of gases, touch attacks that require contact with the wearer's body, and sonic-based attacks. Unfortunately, the wearer is completely immobilized, for it is impossible to move the *stalagmite armor* while it's in stone form. Furthermore, the wearer's air supply is limited to 30 minutes.

While inside the *stalagmite armor* while it is in stone form, the wearer cannot see or hear anything of the outside world (although spells such as *clairvoyance/clairaudience* address this limitation, as can a *crystal ball* if the wearer has a light source inside the armor's interior), nor can those outside hear any noise the wearer might make while inside the armor. It's possible for the wearer to use spells like *teleport* or *dimension door* to leave the armor's interior and get in a few surprise attacks upon enemies before returning to the safety of the stalagmite. Once placed into stone form, however, the *stalagmite armor* can only be returned to its normal appearance by speaking the command word from within the hollow stalagmite.

While in stone form, the *stalagmite armor* has AC 5, hardness 8, and can take 50 points of damage before being destroyed (note that when attacking an immobile object with a melee weapon, the attacker gains a +4 bonus to her attack roll). While hiding within the stalagmite, the wearer of the armor cannot tell it is under attack unless he has some way of magically peeking out at the outside world while cocooned within the armor.

If the *stalagmite armor* receives more than 50 points of damage while it is in stone form, the armor is permanently destroyed. (It reverts to its normal appearance in such an instance and is nonmagical from that point on.) The armor can be completely repaired by casting *stone shape* from within the armor's stalagmite form.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wonderous Item, *mage armor, stoneskin;* **Market Price:** 56,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 28,000 gp + 2,240 XP; **Weight:** 7 lb.

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THE HIGH FLAGON

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The High Flagon stands about two miles outside the north gate of Waterdeep, on the east side of Long Road, which runs to Rassalantar and on up the valley of the Dessarin to Triboar.

In construction, the Flagon is a typical country gambling house, gaudy where it isn't rustic, but lacking the luxury (and haughty airs) of a city gambling establishment. Like most country gaming houses, the Watch stays away, leaving policing of the establishment to a private force of hired guards. Brawls, prostitution, and shady business meetings are the norm, and both drinks and food are overpriced.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The Flagon is a rambling, many-gabled wooden structure that resembles an old house. Owned over the years by a variety of people with very different tastes who all built additions onto the existing structure, the resulting building is a riot of wings, bay windows, and turrets, with a roofed-over porch running along the front and around to the side (to give some relief from the muddy yard and cover in wet weather when one needs to dash to the stables that lie behind the Flagon).

Fire-barrels of water stand everywhere, inside and out ("handy for drownings," as one merchant sourly commented), and the rooms are dingy, though they strain for an air of luxury with many cheap tapestries hung on the walls and black-painted tables and chairs. None of the furniture matches, but they've been made to look as if they do—uniform arched wooden backs having been attached to the chairs and circular or oval tabletops of roughly the same size attached to all the tables.

The Flagon's yard is fenced to keep out thieves, and hired mercenaries patrol all areas of the Flagon, including the stables. There are over thirty "house hands" on duty during the evenings and half that by day, most of them warriors of 1st or 2nd level.

A patron entering the Flagon will see two guards flanking the outer doors, pass through a lobby to a gleaming copper-sheathed inner double door flanked by another two guards, and then enter the dim interior where a gowned hostess awaits (with two guards of her own) to guide the patron to whichever table he desires. All three guard posts have alarm-gongs; striking one rings a central gong in the kitchens, where the owner then swiftly sends out reinforcements.

LIFE IN THE FLAGON

The Flagon is owned by the Harbright family, all of whom tend to be handsome. They are of middling height, seldom run to fat, and have strong features, including hair that goes silver at the temples as they age. One of the elder uncles of the family, Drengar (LN male human Exp6/Rog1), has taken his family away from daily work and life in Waterdeep (largely—and vainly—to protect his daughters from corruption and early marriage to undesirables). He now runs the Flagon, which is rapidly proving far more prosperous than the steady family textile business.

Drengar, who is addressed as "Master" by his staff, is stern but fair, and well regarded by all who work for him. Two shifts (dawn to dusk and vice versa) work the Flagon. The total roster of Flagon employees consists of twenty kitchen staff (Harbrights and local women), three exceptionally beautiful female hostesses, sixteen "tablemasters" (attractive men and women of Waterdeep who administer the games and provide cards, dice, markers, and banking services), twenty-odd stable hands (the Flagon boards mounts and stores coaches for some city folk as well as tending to guests' horses), and forty-six guards.

Travelers setting forth from Waterdeep often arrange to meet at the Flagon (to join a caravan or form a large armed group for travel safety), and this practice is becoming more popular with laborers and merchants of middling fortunes—especially since the game of High Dragon started gaining popularity and Drengar Harbright started "sweetening the winner's pot" with cash prizes.

By day, the Flagon is quiet, sporting only a handful of die-hard gamblers and other folk who desire to meet and do business in private (for 3 sp, one can rent a private, secure room until dusk).

The same rooms, with spartan furnishings and no services but a chamberpot, a blanket, and a bowl of wash-water, can be rented for the night for 2 gp each, but don't expect much quiet. The Flagon staff neither advertises nor encourages rental of their rooms as overnight accommodations for travelers.

It is possible to eavesdrop on the goings-on in many of the Flagon's upper rooms by the use of spy-passages with peepholes, but Harbright doesn't advertise this fact—the extra coin some might pay to "listen in" isn't worth the loss of business (or revenge that might be taken) once word gets around.

House rules at the Flagon include expulsion for those who willfully and repeatedly taunt, cheat, start a fight, draw a weapon, or cause a death.

Fire is the chief fear, and anyone caught deliberately starting or aiding in any conflagration (throwing a lit lamp, for instance, or any act that spills or breaks a lit lamp or lantern) is beaten and expelled. Use of magic is also forbidden in the Flagon. Those caught using magic to cheat are quickly expelled from

the Flagon and banned from returning, while the use of dangerous or violent magic is rewarded with a beating and confiscation of all personal property on hand, or death (depending on the severity of the offense and how dangerous or influential the offender).

BELLY AND GULLET

A vast array of drinks can be had in the Flagon, all served in battered soft metal goblets (glass is too prone to breakage in a place where drinkers are so apt to become either excited or murderous). Prices are as follows: 3 sp per goblet of ale, small beer, herb cordial, beefsimmer broth, or stout, and 1 gp per goblet for all wines, zzar, and spirits (aside from a few rare and fine substances, which start at 7 gp per goblet and go up to whatever the proprietor thinks he can get away with).

Food offerings come without cutlery (to be eaten with one's fingers) and are limited to hot tarts, skewer-fowl, and fryplates. Savory tarts (usually rabbit or game fowl) are 3 sp each. Sweetberry tarts go for 2 sp each and are filled with gooseberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cranberries, or a mixture of any or all of these. Skewer-fowl are roasted whole fowl served on wooden skewers, and most tend to be chickens or ducks, often tough, ancient, domesticated birds that have been marinated in the wine-dregs. A fryplate is a small wooden plate containing a pair of small, thick oval slices of bread that have been fried in the drippings from the skewer-fowl, overlaid by four or five "frystrips" of peppery seasoned beef, venison, and hog.

GAMING AT THE FLAGON

The Flagon offers only card games. Until recently it also offered dice games and "live" games, but the numerous brawls that arose as a result of these games convinced Drengar to ban them at the Flagon. The most dominant game at the Flagon is High Dragon, although Archers and Swords are also popular games. It should be noted that some card games involve the use of dice in play, but these are hosted at the Flagon.

Archers

This 4-8 player game uses the same deck as High Dragon (described below), with the same card rankings. Each player is dealt a card face down (which they can't examine), and then 2 cards into their hand.

One player begins by "shooting an arrow" (presenting an attacking card to a target player of her choice). The defender shows a defending card, and the highest card wins.

If the attacker wins, she gets the defender's face-down card. She is then allowed to examine the card—other players are not—shuffle her hand, and choose either to keep the same card face down or replace it with a new card.

If the defender wins, the attacker withdraws the attacking card, and the defender becomes the archer, free to attack the same or another player by "shooting an arrow."

If attacking and defending cards are of the same rank, the attacker and defender exchange face-down cards without displaying them to other players.

The first player to have six face-down cards is the winner (hands must remain 2 cards in size, and only one face-down card is hazarded in battle; the others remain as booty, so this represents 5 wins over any losses). In multiple-player games, it's common to wager on the second, third, and even fourth winners as well as the first.

High Dragon

This three-player card game has recently soared in popularity, to the extent that fanciful and beautifully illustrated decks of cards are now being made for it and bought avidly by people from all walks of life.

High Dragon is played with three courts (suits) of cards: Blue Shield, Green Tree, and Silver Sword. In descending order, each suit has the following cards: King Dragon, Death Dragon, Queen Dragon, Young Dragon, Dragonslayer, Hero, Knight, Minstrel, Wandering Wizard, Warrior of the 11th, Warrior of the 10th, Warrior of the 9th, Warrior of the 8th, Warrior of the 7th, Warrior of the 6th, Warrior of the 5th, Squire, Knave, Stone, and Well.

The object of the game is to win "battles" (tricks) by playing the highest total card score into a battle. First, the deck is shuffled and a Silent Hand (dummy) is dealt face down and set aside, to be kept out of play for the game. Then, 7 cards are dealt face down to each player, for their examination, and the top remaining card of the deck is turned up to become the battle card. This card serves no other purpose in the game except to determine, by its own court, which is the ranking court for a particular battle (to break ties).

A battle begins with the dealer (or the winner of the last battle) playing a face-down card. Then the second and third players also play face-down cards. The first player then plays a second card face-up, followed by the second and third players. Only then are the face-down cards turned over to resolve the winner of the battle. The highest score wins, and when scores match, the player who played the most battle court cards wins; if there's still a tie, then the rank of battle court cards is referred to.

Following this, another card of the deck is turned over to reveal the new battle court, and another battle is played. After every two battles, all cards except the Silent Hand are collected, shuffled, and dealt out again.

Betting is permitted on each battle or on the majority winner of a "war" of 12 battles. If a war has a three-way tie, there's no winner, and another war is played. If there's a two-way tie, the loser drops out and the two remaining players continue with 9-card hands (and two 9-card Silent Hands), and battles become 3-card affairs: a card face down, then a card face up, and then the third card face down again.

Smashcastle

This is a "quiet" bettors game, often used to pass the time in a friendly, non-wagering manner while gossip or business dealings are completed. It's played with two identical High Dragon decks and consists of various forms of solitaire (each player in a game of Smashcastle must play the same form of solitaire) in which players draw, play, and discard in unison—but their discards go to the other player.

Most of the solitaire games used in the Roaring Dragon, according to Elminster, are what we would call "Klondike" or "Can-can."

Wealthy Waterdhavian matrons often play Smashcastle with servants or when calling on each other by day, and it's apt to be sneered at by the younger crowd.

Swords

Elminster tell us that this card game is essentially euchre, with the addition of an Emperor card that outranks the Ace (known as a Throne or Castle card).

THE HIGH
FLAGON

1 To guard against robberies and staff thefts, the Flagon has several "pour chutes" built into doorframes: little doors that pull out to form a spout into a vertical pipe to the cellars. Coins poured down these chutes pile up inside cavities in hollow walls and can be reached by concealed doors (Search check, DC 30). Keys to those doors are kept in a drawer-safe (Open Lock, DC 35) to which only Drengar has access. A successful Search check (DC 30) locates a loose floorboard under one of Drengar's bedchamber walls. To reach the safe, one must lift the right floorboard and reach sideways, out of sight.

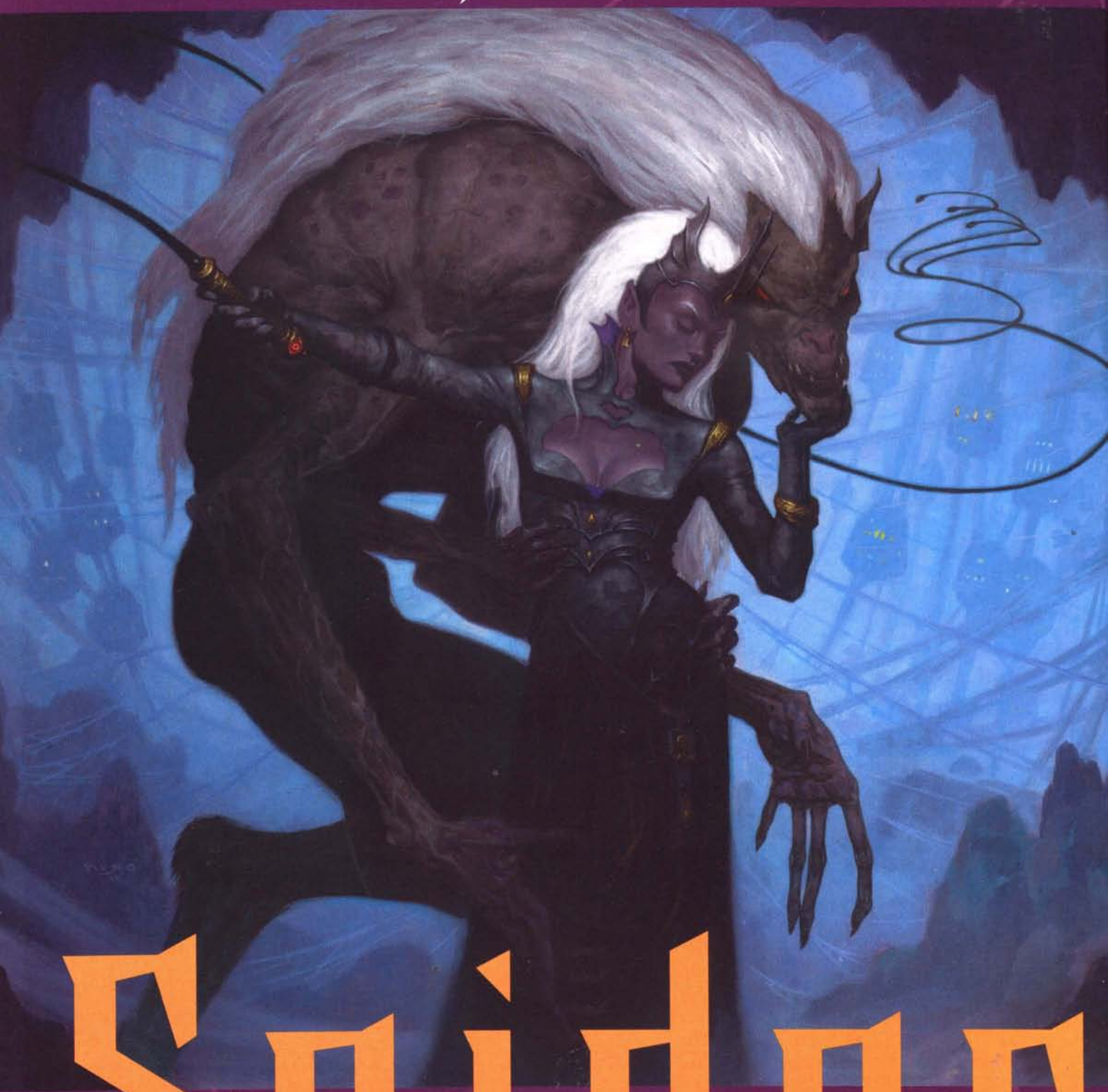
2 Between the ground-floor game room and the rentable upper rooms is a crawl-space with peepholes sited above every gaming table. These are used, albeit rarely, by the Flagon staff to catch persistent cheaters. A person standing in the game room can locate the peepholes with a successful Spot check (DC 30).

3 Spyholes overlook most upper rooms (Spot check, DC 20). All rooms have lockable doorbars from the inside (Open Lock, DC 30).

4 Staff-access closets on every floor contain weapons, small sandbags for hurling at fighting guests, large blankets for bundling up and disposing corpses and other "messes," and mop-buckets. The ground-floor closet has a hidden foot-lever (Search DC, 23) that swings the floor aside so that items can quickly be dropped into the cellars for hiding.

Rogues Gallery:

THE HEROES OF THE Spider



WAR OF THE QUEEN

by Richard Baker · illustrated by Brom

Below the cold frontier lands of Faerûn's mighty North lies an ancient evil—Menzoberranzan, the City of Spiders, a great city of the dark elves. Haughty and ruthless, scheming and sinister, the powerful priestesses and lords of the drow plot and feud endlessly to advance their noble houses over the houses of their rivals. For dozens of centuries the drow have dreamed their great dark dream in the blackness of the Underdark, reveling in malice, treachery, and the sinister beauty of their lightless city.

Over this endless dance of ambition and vendettas reigns Lolth, the Queen of Spiders, supreme goddess of the drow pantheon. Ancient corruptor of the drow race, Lolth demands absolute fealty and worship from her chosen people. At her command, the priestesses pour out blood and gold upon her sinister altars; at her command, the strong and ruthless are rewarded, and the weak are culled. All of Menzoberranzan is hers, and for thousands of years Lolth has watched over the City of Spiders—until now.

THE WAR OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

The foundations of the War of the Spider Queen were laid in a story conference in May of 2001, when a team of authors, editors, and game designers came together to discuss the preliminary ideas of the story. The team included authors R. A. Salvatore, Richard Lee Byers, and Thomas Reid; game designer James Wyatt, author of the *City of the Spider Queen* adventure; FORGOTTEN REALMS creative director Richard Baker; FORGOTTEN REALMS business manager Anthony Valterra; and FORGOTTEN REALMS product editor Phil Athans, the genius (or madman) who came up with the scheme of an epic six-part book series by multiple authors under the aegis of R. A. Salvatore's dark vision of the cruel and deadly drow.

R.A. Salvatore's War of the Spider Queen series tells the story of a terrible crisis unfolding within the darkly wondrous cities of the drow. Lolth has gone silent. She answers no prayers, offers no signs, and bestows no spells upon her loyal priestesses. The first book in the series, *Dissolution* by Richard Lee Byers, introduced a number of the characters who became embroiled in the effort to understand—and survive—Lolth's mysterious absence. Among these are Pharaun Mizzrym, a Master of Sorcere; Jeggred, a draegloth of House Baenre; Quenthel Baenre, the Mistress of Arach-Tinilith; and Gromph Baenre, the Archmage of Menzoberranzan. Quenthel and Gromph Baenre were first described in the Menzoberranzan boxed set, while Pharaun and Jeggred (along with a number of other key characters) came into being in the conception of the series.

The War of the Spider Queen series continues with Thomas Reid's *Insurrection*, scheduled for release in December 2002, and then Richard Baker's *Condemnation* in May 2003. Meanwhile, look for more of Menzoberranzan's champions and enemies in future issues of *DRAGON Magazine*.

PHARAUN MIZZRYM, MASTER OF SORCERE

Son of Miz'ri Mizzrym, the Matron Mother of House Mizzrym, Pharaun is a highborn drow noble and a Master of Sorcere, the wizards' academy of Menzoberranzan. He is a fine-featured, handsome dark elf with a thin, cruel mouth and elegantly coiffed hair. Pharaun is meticulous in his grooming and wears only the finest, most stylish clothing. He is ambitious, brilliant, and haughty, a powerful mage who combines insatiable curiosity with an utter lack of scruples. Wry and witty, he is a charming dandy who conceals a cold lust for power behind the mannerisms of a noble-born epicure. Pharaun is no stranger to vanity; he is all too aware of what a gifted individual he is.

Pharaun began his career much like many highborn males, as a minor mageling of little account virtually ignored by his powerful female relations. He survived to attend Sorcere, the city's academy for wizards, and flourished there. When he returned to House Mizzrym from Sorcere, the quiet and studious boy had grown into a confident and skilled wizard, powerful

PHARAUN'S UNIQUE ITEMS

Pharaun possesses many powerful and useful magic items, several of which he crafted himself. His signature items include a piwafwi *(cloak of elvenkind)* that provides an armor bonus in addition to the cloak's normal Hide bonus, a silver signet ring with several powers, a *ring of storing*, and a magic rapier with the obedient special ability (see the New Magic Weapon Special Ability sidebar for a description of the obedient special ability).

- *Pharaun's Piwafwi:* This black, shadowy cloak provides a +8 armor bonus to its wearer. In addition, when worn with the hood drawn up around the head, the piwafwi gives its wearer a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Caster Level: 16th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *mage armor, invisibility*, creator must be a drow; **Market Price:** 68,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 34,000 gp + 2,720 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

- *Pharaun's Signet Ring:* Emblazoned with the sign of Sorcere, this ring functions as a *ring of protection +3* and a *ring of wizardry II*. Additionally, the ring confers a +10 circumstance bonus to the wearer's Spot checks and allows him to cast *detect magic* at will.

Caster Level: 14th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *limited wish, detect magic, shield of faith, clairaudience/clairvoyance;* **Market Price:** 82,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 41,000 gp + 3,280 XP; **Weight:** —.

- *Ring of Storing:* This is identical to a *glove of storing*, except that it is in ring form. On command, one object held in the hand wearing the ring disappears. The object may not weigh more than 20 pounds and must be able to be held in one hand. An item stored in the ring can be retrieved with a silent mental command as a free action. The ring can only store one item at a time. The item stored is held in stasis and shrunk down to such a tiny size that it fits within a miniscule cavity within the ring. If the effect is dispelled or suppressed, the stored item appears instantly.

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *shrink item;* **Market Price:** 2,200 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,100 gp + 88 XP; **Weight:** —.

- *Drow House Insignia:* This brooch is worked in the design of a noble house's symbol. It allows the wearer to levitate as if he had cast *levitate* on himself. The brooch does not take up an item slot.

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *levitate;* **Market Price:** 15,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 7,500 gp + 600 XP; **Weight:** —.

enough to hold his own among his murderous family. Pharaun became embroiled in a feud between his sisters Greyanna and Sabal, twins who despised one another. Pharaun supported Sabal against Greyanna, but in time Greyanna prevailed. She destroyed Sabal, and Pharaun survived her wrath only by fleeing from House Mizzrym and taking shelter in Sorcere.

Under threat of assassination should he leave the refuge of the academy, Pharaun naturally devoted himself to mastering the arcane arts and climbing the ladder of station and rank within Sorcere. He excelled at both endeavors, becoming one of the city's most powerful wizards and a Master of Sorcere. Yet even his skill and rank proved insufficient to completely protect him from the consequences of a mistake. Seeking more power, Pharaun used a number of apprentices to summon a dangerous demon that slew most of the novices who had aided the Sorcere Master. The Matron Mothers of the novices' houses did not view their sons and nephews as expendable commodities, and so Pharaun finds himself under threat of death once again when *Dissolution* begins.

Pharaun Mizzrym, male drow Wiz14/Acm3: CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 17d4 + 34; hp 83; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 60 ft.; AC 26, touch 18, flat-footed 21; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+2/19-20, *+2 dagger*) and +10/+5 melee (1d6+2/18-20, *+2 obedient rapier*), or +13 ranged touch (by spell), or +18 ranged (1d4+5/19-20, *+2 hand crossbow* with *+3 bolts);* SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, high arcana (mastery of counterspelling, spell power +2, spell-like ability [*dimension door*]; permanent spells (*detect magic, see invisibility);* SR 28; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +15, Will +18; Str 10, Dex 21, Con 14, Int 26, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Alchemy +14, Balance +8, Bluff +6, Concentration +17, Gather Information +4, Hide +17, Intimidate +6, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (local, Underdark) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Scry +16, Spellcraft +25, Search +13, Sense Motive +4, Spot +21; *Feats:* Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Illusion), Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration, Still Spell.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—dancing lights, darkness, and *faerie fire.* Pharaun uses these abilities as a 17th-level sorcerer; 2/day—*dimension door.* Pharaun uses this ability as a 17th-level wizard.

Languages Known: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon.

SQ—High Arcana: An archmage may choose to take a special ability from a select list by permanently eliminating one spell slot. See the entry for the archmage prestige class in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* for a list of the abilities an archmage may choose from.

Spells Prepared (4/6/10/6/5/4/5/2/3/1; base save DC = 20 + spell level, 22 + spell level for Evocation or Illusion spells): 0—*daze, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost;*

1st—*burning hands, cause fear, charm person, mage armor, shocking grasp, summon monster I;* 2nd—*Aganazzar's scorcher** x2, *alter self, cat's grace, detect thoughts, ghoul touch, invisibility, mirror image, resist elements, see invisibility;* 3rd—*fireball, fly, haste, invisibility sphere, nondetection, suggestion;* 4th—*charm monster, dimension door, Evard's black tentacles, improved invisibility, summon monster IV;* 5th—*cloudkill, cone of cold, teleport, wall of force;* 6th—*chain lightning, circle of death, guards and wards, planar binding, true seeing;* 7th—*finger of death, shadow walk;* 8th—*flensing***, *greater planar binding, horrid wilting;* 9th—*power word kill.*

*Spell from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*

Possessions: +3 obedient rapier (kept in *ring of storing*)*, *+2 dagger, +2 hand crossbow,* 50 *+3 hand crossbow bolts, vest of resistance +5, Pharaun's piwafwi**, *belt of health +4, gloves of Dexterity +4, headband of intellect +4, Pharaun's signet ring, ring of storing, boots of striding and springing, wand of lightning bolt* (10th-level caster), *wand of daylight, wand of magic missile* (9th-level caster), *wand of detect secret doors, Heward's handy haversack, drow house insignia,* 11 workbooks (spellbooks of dragonhide and vellum, guarded by *major resistance, blindness,* and *spelltrap).*

*See the New Magic Weapon Special Ability sidebar for a description of the obedient special ability.

Jeggred, Son of Triele Baenre

Jeggred is a draegloth, a half-drow/half-demon born from the union of a drow high priestess and a summoned demon. In Jeggred's case, the priestess was Triele Baenre, Matron Mother of House Baenre and former Mistress of Arach-Tinilith. Jeggred towers over the typical drow, standing almost 8 feet in height with a broad, powerful frame. He has four arms—two long fighting arms equipped with dagger-like claws, and two smaller drow-sized arms slightly within and beneath his large upper pair. His face is drowlike in appearance, although his features are long and muzzle-like, with a mouthful of needle-sharp fangs. A mane of white hair grows thickly enough to form a half-pelt over his ebon skin, and his legs are more like those of a hunting cat than a humanoid.

Despite Jeggred's bestial appearance, he is far from stupid. Behind his feral glee in bloodshed lies a cold and murderous mind that delights in acts of malice. Most drow kill or hurt others in order to advance their designs, but Jeggred is a fiend in every sense of the word, eager to kill for the sheer pleasure of it. Only his unswerving loyalty to the Spider Queen and her mortal agents, the high priestesses of Lolth, holds him in check.

Jeggred is quite young compared to many of the other drow of House Baenre. His mother Triele conceived him only ten years ago. Draegloths, however, reach their full growth quickly. He reached maturity within four years of

NEW MAGIC WEAPON SPECIAL ABILITIES

Two of the items presented in this article have new special abilities. These abilities can be added to any magic weapon, following the normal rules for adding special abilities to magic weapons as presented in chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Obedient: An obedient weapon can be loosed (requiring a standard action) to attack on its own. It fights independently of its wielder using the base attack bonus of the wielder. It never travels more than 120 feet from its wielder and attacks the target designated until the target falls or moves out of range. The wielder can mentally command the obedient weapon to attack a different target with a standard action or summon the weapon to return to his hand as a free action.

While acting independently of the wielder, the obedient weapon flies at a speed of 90 ft. (good). It has the normal hardness, hit points, and Armor Class of a magical weapon of its type but is considered to be attended by its owner for purposes of saving throws, even if it is attacking independently. A creature must carry the obedient weapon on his person for at least 1 hour to establish the mental link necessary to command the weapon to fight independently, and the obedient weapon obeys only one master at a time.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *animate object;* **Market Price:** +5 bonus.

Extending: An extending weapon can alter its length to add or subtract 5 feet of reach. Once per round as a free action, the wielder of an extending weapon can make the weapon assume a length 5 feet longer or shorter than its normal length. The wielder must state, at the beginning of her turn, whether the weapon extends or shortens. Melee weapons can be turned into reach weapons to threaten foes 10 feet away, but when extended, the weapon no longer threatens foes within 5 feet of the wielder. Reach weapons can be set to threaten targets 5, 10, or 15 feet away. If set for 10 feet, the reach weapon no longer threatens adjacent foes, and if set for 15 feet it no longer threatens opponents 5 or 10 feet away. The extending property can only be added to Large hafted melee weapons (anything except a sword), flails, chains, whips, and similar weapons.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *enlarge, reduce;* **Market Price:** +1 bonus.

JEGGRED'S UNIQUE ITEMS

Jeggred's mother has seen to it that her prized son is well-equipped with magic items suitable to his stature and talents. His signature items include a *piwafwi* (or *cloak of elvenkind)* that provides a resistance bonus to saving throws in addition to the cloak's normal Hide bonus; *bracers of the blinding strike* that give the wearer a +6 armor bonus, the Improved Initiative feat, and one extra melee attack at the wearer's highest attack bonus as per a weapon of speed; and an amulet that enchants his claws with *greater magic fang.*

- *Belt of Power:* This finely tooled leather belt provides a +4 enhancement bonus to both Strength and Dexterity.

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *bull's strength, endurance;* **Market Price:** 48,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 24,000 gp + 1,920 XP; **Weight:** 2 lbs.

- *Jeggred's Amulet:* Inscribed with the image of a demonic face twisted in fury, this amulet bestows *greater magic fang* on two of the wearer's natural attacks, giving each a +3 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls. In addition, the amulet provides a +4 enhancement bonus to the wearer's Constitution.

Caster Level: 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *endurance, greater magic fang;* **Market Price:** 86,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 43,000 gp + 3,440 XP; **Weight:** —.

- *Piwafwi of Resistance:* This black cloak adds a +4 resistance bonus to the wearer's saving throws and a +10 circumstance bonus to the wearer's Hide checks.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility, resistance;* **Market Price:** 20,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 10,000 gp + 800 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

his birth and has served as his mother's personal bodyguard, assassin, and executioner for several years now. At a single word from her, the draegloth can hurl himself into a blinding storm of fangs and talons capable of shredding whole squads of common soldiers. Even the mighty of Menzoberranzan shrink from giving offense to Matron Baenre in the presence of her demonic son.

Jeggred Baenre, male draegloth Bbng/Ftr4: CR 18; Large outsider (8 ft. 11in. tall); HD 6d8+36 plus 9d12+54 plus 4d10+24; hp 231; Init +11 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 30, touch 19, flat-footed 23; Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; Atk +33/+33/+33 melee (1d6+16, claws with *greater magic fang*) and +27 melee (1d8+5, bite); SA rage, spell-like abilities; SQ draegloth traits, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +25, Ref +20, Will +14; Str 32, Dex 24, Con 22, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +24, Hide +29, Intimidate +8, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +23, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +14, Move Silently +16, Search +6, Spot +14; *Feats:* Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Specialization (claw).

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, desecrate, faerie fire, unholy blight;* 4/day—*darkness.* Jeggred uses these abilities as a 6th-level sorcerer.

Languages Known: Abyssal, Elven, Undercommon.

Possessions: Bracers of the blinding strike, ring of protection +3, piwafwi of resistance +4, Jeggred's amulet, belt of power +4,* bandolier, bedroll, and routine supplies.

*See the *Magic of Fearûn* for a description of this item.

QUENTHEL BAENRE

Mistress of Arach-Tinilith and second only to her sister Triele in mighty House Baenre, Quenthel is the epitome of the noble drow priestess. She is arrogant, confident, and fearless. She was born to rule among her kind, and from her earliest years she has devoted herself to the worship of the Spider Queen, the advancement of her House, and the acquisition of personal power and influence. No dark elf other than a Matron of the Ruling Council, or perhaps her brother Gromph, would dare gainsay her least command. Physically, Quenthel is a tall, athletic, and graceful dark elf of great beauty.

Quenthel is one of the younger daughters of the old Matron Baenre who sat at the center of Menzoberranzan's webs for so long. Her mother was one of the most powerful and successful Matrons ever to rise to the leadership of the city, and consequently she was a harsh taskmaster with

her own children. Of all her sisters, Quenthel comes closest to matching her mother's capabilities and talents, although she lacks the gifts of patience and subtlety that marked Matron Baenre's long rule. Quenthel rose quickly past several of her older sisters in her mother's eyes, and when Matron Baenre died, she stood behind only one—Triele, the eldest of them all.

When Triele ascended to become Matron Mother of House Baenre and leader of Menzoberranzan's Ruling Council, Quenthel took her sister's place as Mistress of Arach-Tinilith, the temple-school in which highborn drow females are instructed in the worship of the Spider Queen. She has governed Arach-Tinilith for almost ten years now, and during that time she has become a daunting Mistress indeed. She is almost unique among the drow of Menzoberranzan in that she has been slain once (by none other than Drizzt Do'Urden, in fact) and returned from the Demonweb Pits to continue her service to the Spider Queen. The circumstances of Quenthel's resurrection are shrouded in mystery, and the Mistress of Arach-Tinilith does not speak of who returned her to life or why.

Quenthel Baenre, female drow Clr15/Dis4 of Lolth: CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 15d8+45 plus 4d8+12; hp 156; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 38, touch 19, flat-footed 34; Atk +24/+24/+19/+14 melee (1d8+10/19-20, *Quenthel's scourge);* SA imbue with spell ability, rebuke undead, rebuke spiders, spell-like abilities; SQ divine emissary, drow traits, evasion, sacred defense +2; SR 30; AL CE; SV Fort +21, Ref +15, Will +26; Str 20, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 26, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +14, Heal +14, Hide +14, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (religion) +16, Listen +14, Scry +13, Spellcraft +13, Search +5, Sense Motive +13, Spot +15, Tumble +4; *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (scourge), Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Spellcasting Prodigy, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (scourge).

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire. Quenthel uses these spell-like abilities as a 19th-level sorcerer.

Languages Known: Abyssal, Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Undercommon.

SA—Imbue With Spell Ability (Sp): As a standard action, Quenthel can freely transfer currently prepared spells of 1st or 2nd level to a willing recipient. This does not require a 4th-level spell slot but otherwise works like the *imbue with spell ability* spell.

SQ—Divine Emissary: Quenthel can telepathically communicate with any outsider within 60 feet, provided the outsider is chaotic evil or serves Lolth.

SQ—Sacred Defense +2: Quenthel has a +2 bonus to saving throws against divine spells and the spell-like or supernatural abilities of outsiders.

Spells Prepared (6/9/8/8/8/8/6/6/5/5; base save DC = 19 + spell level): During the events described in the War of the Spider Queen series, Quenthel does not receive spells from Lolth and cannot prepare any of her spells. *Domains:* Darkness (gain the Blind-Fight feat for free), Evil (+1 caster level with Evil spells), Spider (rebuke or command spiders as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead; can use this ability a total number of times per day equal to 3 + Charisma modifier).

Possessions: Quenthel's scourge (intelligent +5 extending scourge of speed), +5 moderate fortification elven chain, +4 buckler, belt of giant strength +6, gloves of dexterity +4, Arach-Tinilith ring, amulet of natural armor +4, headband of Wisdom +6, ring of*

QUENTHEL'S UNIQUE ITEMS

As a high priestess from an old and powerful house, Quenthel can arm herself with the very finest magic items. Her signature weapon, however, is her magic scourge, a unique item that she crafted herself under the guidance of the Spider Queen. The scourge is a snake-headed whip with five heads, each possessed of a wicked intelligence and capable of speech. The five personas bound to Quenthel's scourge are Yngoth (the wisest), K'Sothra (the most bloodthirsty), Hsiv (an advisor, the first imp bound into the whip), Zinda (the boldest), and Qorra (the most venomous). Quenthel hooks the whip to her belt with a wyvern hide loop at the end of the handle.

• *Quenthel's Scourge:* This weapon is a *+5 extending scourge of speed.* It is an intelligent item (Int 15, Wis 19, and Cha 12), its sentience consisting of five distinct demonic personalities imprisoned within its snake-like heads. It can communicate by speech and telepathy, and has the following abilities:

*Free use of Combat Reflexes

**Detect poison* at will

*Free use of uncanny dodge (as 5th-level barbarian)

*Free use of evasion

* *True seeing* at will

**Haste* 1/day, 10-round duration

Quenthel's scourge has the special purpose of defending the servants and interests of a specific deity—in this case, Lolth. As Quenthel is a relatively good judge of the Spider Queen's will, she can usually call upon the weapon's special purpose power without much justification, but another wielder would be unable to make use of this power unless the scourge itself determined that the mission at hand was of direct and immediate importance to Lolth's faith in Faerûn. When using the scourge to defend the interests of Lolth and after making a successful melee attack, the scourge's viper heads inject caustic venom into the target. The venom is similar to that created by the *poison* spell (Fortitude save, DC 19; initial damage 1d10 Constitution, secondary damage 1d10 Constitution). Quenthel's scourge has an ego of 30 and is chaotic evil.

Caster Level: 17th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste, miracle, poison, true seeing,* creator must be a cleric of Lolth; **Market Price:** 335,000 gp; **Weight:** 2 lbs.

• *Arach-Tinilith Ring:* Created only for the highest-ranking priestesses of the order of Arach-Tinilith, this potent ring imbues its wearer with a +6 enhancement bonus to Constitution and a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma. It also renders the wearer immune to *detect thoughts, discern lies,* and any attempt to magically discern the wearer's alignment.

Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *eagle's splendor, endurance;* **Market Price:** 60,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 30,000 gp + 2,400 XP; **Weight:** —.

• *Piwafwi of Resistance +5:* This black cloak adds a +5 resistance bonus to the wearer's saving throws and a +10 circumstance bonus to the wearer's Hide checks.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility, resistance;* **Market Price:** 29,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 14,500 gp + 1,160 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

GROMPH'S UNIQUE ITEMS

Like Pharaun, Gromph has crafted a number of potent items for himself. He has also inherited powerful magic items in his role as Archmage and first son of House Baenre. His signature items include the *Robe of the Archmage of Menzoberranzan*, a *staff of power*, and the unique *skull sapphire*.

• *Robe of the Archmage of Menzoberranzan:* This elegant black garment is embroidered with mithral thread in a spiderweb design. It provides a +8 armor bonus and a +4 enhancement bonus to Wisdom. *Magic missiles* striking the wearer are automatically negated, just as if they had impacted a target protected by a *shield* spell. Once per day the wearer of the robe may activate *spell turning* with a duration of 16 rounds. The robe can turn 10 spell levels per day.

Caster Level: 16th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *endurance, mage armor, negative energy protection, owl's insight, shield,* creator must be a drow; **Market Price:** 182,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 91,000 gp + 7,280 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

• *Gromph's Skull Sapphire:* The clear, ghostly image of a grinning skull is trapped in the depths of this mystical black star sapphire. *Gromph's skull sapphire* functions much like a *pearl of power;* three times per day on command it enables the possessor to recall a Necromancy spell of 7th level or lower that he has already prepared and cast. The spell is then prepared again, just as if it had never been cast. The owner of the skull sapphire is also protected by *negative energy protection* as cast by a wizard of 17th level.

Gromph's skull sapphire only functions in the hands of an evil wizard who knows at least one spell from the school of Necromancy. A character of good alignment who carries *Gromph's skull sapphire* in his possession gains 2 negative levels. These negative levels cannot result in actual level loss, but they remain as long as the sapphire is in the character's possession.

Caster Level: 17th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, creator must be able to cast one Necromancy spell at each level from 0 to 7th, *negative energy protection;* **Market Price:** 150,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 75,000 gp + 6,000 XP; **Weight:** —.

• *Piwafwi of Resistance +5:* This black cloak adds a +5 resistance bonus to the wearer's saving throws and a +10 circumstance bonus to the wearer's Hide checks.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility, resistance;* **Market Price:** 29,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 14,500 gp + 1,160 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

*protection +5, piwafwi of resistance +5, rod of viscid globs**, boots of speed, wand of chaos hammer (8th-level caster), wand of cure serious wounds, bag of holding 3, 4 beads of force, drow house insignia,* backpack, bedroll, and routine supplies.

*See the New Magic Weapon Special Abilities sidebar for a description of the extending special ability.

**See the *Magic of Faerûn* for a description of this item.

GROMPH BAENRE

Archmage of Menzoberranzan and the firstborn son of House Baenre, Gromph is the most powerful and influential male of Menzoberranzan. Ruler of the wizards' college of Sorcere, Gromph fears nothing in Menzoberranzan except the concerted wrath of the entire Ruling Council of Matron Mothers.

Cautious and deliberate, Gromph is a patient and thoughtful archmage who has long since outgrown the need to demonstrate his wit and skill to others. He recognizes that he has reached the very apex of power permitted a male in the society of the dark elves, and while others might chafe beneath those restrictions, Gromph is content (after a fashion) to hold the position he has won and discharge its duties to the best of his ability.

He is not without ambition, of course; Gromph is a Lolth-fearing dark elf, and he is not afraid to extend his grasp through the medium of his sister Triele, Matron Mother of House Baenre. By serving as her indispensable advisor and ally, Gromph gains the ability to manipulate indirectly the deliberations of the Ruling Council.

Gromph has ruled over Sorcere for almost two hundred years. Within that time he has personally seen to the training of dozens of Menzoberranzan's most renowned mages. He is not afraid to destroy ambitious underlings who dream of unseating him and has considered the possibility of killing Pharaun Mizzrym on several occasions, most recently when the younger wizard caused the deaths of a number of novices in a reckless summoning.

Acerbic and gruff, Gromph is a master of holding his tongue. He keeps his thoughts to himself, and he hoards information in much the same way that a Sembian merchant hoards gemstones. He has made a career of ferreting out the secrets and weaknesses of Menzoberranzan's great mages and clerics, and on several occasions he has arranged the destruction of rivals by simply making sure that the right secret comes to the attention of the right person. The Archmage of Menzoberranzan is phenomenally intelligent and observant, and few can keep secrets from him for long.

Gromph Baenre, male drow Div18/Acm4: CR 23; Medium-size humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 18d4+72 plus 4d4+16; hp 128; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 35, touch 22, flat-footed 30; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+1, *staff of power)* or +16 ranged touch (by spell); SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ drow traits, high arcana, familiar, permanent spells (*detect magic, protection from arrows, see invisibility, tongues);* SR 33; AL NE; SV Fort +19, Ref +18, Will +26; Str 9, Dex 20 , Con 18, Int 30, Wis 20, Cha 14.

Skills: Alchemy +20, Bluff +5, Concentration +26, Diplomacy +9, Hide +17, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +34, Knowledge (local, Underdark) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Listen +11, Scry +25, Spellcraft +36, Search +20, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Netherese, Seldruin, Thorass), Spot +12; *Feats:* Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Spell Capacity, Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, Persistent Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Focus (Necromancy), Spell Penetration.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire.* Gromph casts these spells as a 22nd-level sorcerer.

Languages Known: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Giant, Netherese, Seldruin, Thorass, Undercommon.

SQ—High Arcana: An archmage may choose to take a special ability from a select list by permanently eliminating one spell slot. See the

entry for the archmage prestige class in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* for a list of the abilities an archmage may choose from.

Familiar (rat): HD 22; hp 64; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 22; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d3-4, bite); SQ Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch spells, speak with master, speak with rats, *scry* on familiar; SR 27; SV as Gromph; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Spells Prepared (5/8/8/7/7/7/7/6/6/3; base save DC = 26 + spell level, 28 + spell level for Evocation or Necromancy spells): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, prestidigitation, resistance* x2; 1st—*alarm, cause fear, change self, endure elements, identify, mage armor, protection from good, shield;* 2nd—*Aganazzar's scorcher*, alter self, blur, detect thoughts, see invisibility, spectral hand, summon monster II;* 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, fly, haste, magic circle against good, nondetection;* 4th—*detect scrying, dimension door, minor globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, polymorph self, scrying, summon monster IV;* 5th—*dismissal, false vision, lesser planar binding, magic jar, prying eyes, teleport;* 6th—*acid fog, analyze dweomer, antimagic field, disintegrate, glove of invulnerability, mass haste, true seeing;* 7th—*banishment, delayed blast fireball, finger of death, limited wish, sequester, spell turning;* 8th—*discern location, etherealness, greater planer binding, mind blank, iron body, screen;* 9th—*energy drain, foresight, meteor swarm, Mordenkainen's disjunction, prismatic sphere, wish;* 10th—*analyze dweomer* (quickened), *chain lightning* (quickened), *true seeing* (extended).

*Spell from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*

Possessions: Staff of power, piwafwi of resistance +5, robes of the archmage of Menzoberranzan, Gromph's skull sapphire, gloves of Dexterity +4, bracers of health +6, headband of intellect +6, ring of protection +5, amulet of natural armor +5, crystal ball, ring of regeneration, boots of speed, drow house insignia, rod of security, staff of fiendish darkness, wand of fear, bag of holding 2, talisman of the sphere,* 16 workbooks* (spellbooks made of dragonhide and vellum, guarded by *major resistance* and glamered to appear as jars of common potion ingredients), 16 greatbooks** (spellbooks made of mithral and copper foil, guarded by *major resistance* and spelltrapped with *enervation),* and many other mundane possessions.

*See the *Magic of Faerûn* for a description of this item.

**Based on information found in the spellbook section in chapter 6: Magic Items in *Magic of Faerûn.* D

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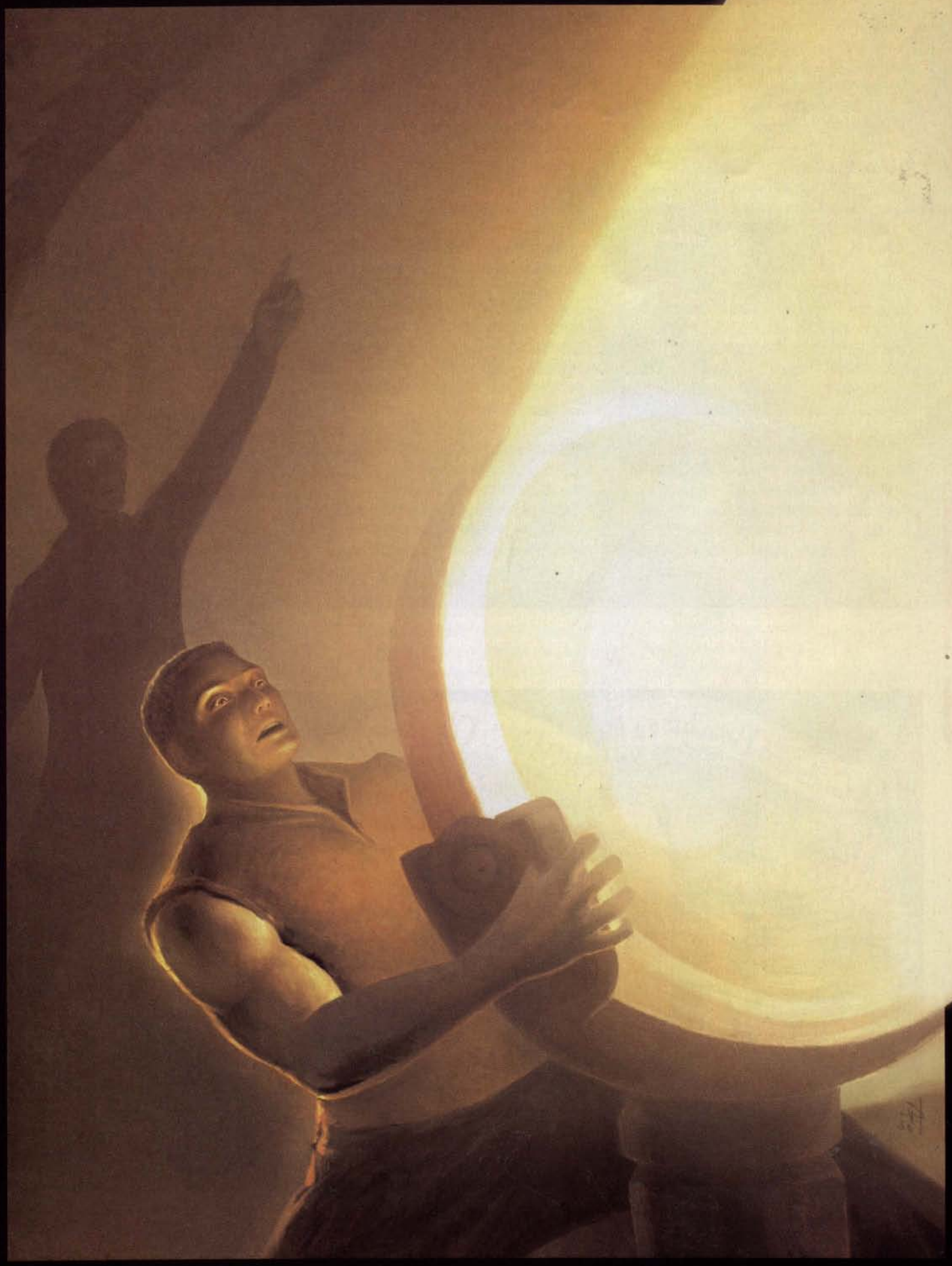

by Robert E. Vardeman · illustrated by Kyle Anderson

THE HOSTILE DARK

"Let us make the wager for life or death."

"Too commonplace," came the soft, catlike purr of a reply to Illyeso Three-Fingers's suggestion. "The gamble ought to be for something . . . more."

Illyeso shifted his massive bulk, eyes darting about, whether in fear at the audacious proposition or from interest at something bestirring his jaded spirits it could not be said. His luminous eyes turned toward the absolute darkness from whence came the voice and blinked slowly. His eyelids drooped in feigned ennui. The brilliance of his gaze belied the attitude the wizard wished to project.

"More?"

"Yes, more," rasped the voice edged in steel.

"So be it," Illyeso said, blinking hard, and the complex game began.

Breis's stubby nose worked like a rabbit's as it caught the bouquet of baking bread intermixed with the less heady but still intriguing scents of fresh fruits. The preeminent market of Ostmarch held few browsers at this time of day, the oppressive warmth driving many to seek shelter in dramshops or pursue other forms of heat in cool, discreetly curtained bedchambers for hire. This lack of customers—of witnesses—for the fine wares stretching out in long rows inexorably drew him, for his skills at rolling dice the night before had proven less than adequate for the task of winning.

"We wouldn't have to steal if you hadn't bet so heavily," grumbled Tymon. The one-eyed freebooter towered over his shorter friend and adjusted the furred patch covering his gaping eye socket. "Never roll dice made from a wizard's molars."

"You've mentioned that once or twice since last night," Breis said, turning slightly so his sword knocked over some carelessly placed brassware. The loud clatter brought immediate attention, both from the merchant and a handful of others nearby seeking any titillation in the midst of the stifling noonday heat.

"You damaged my most precious urn!" shrieked the merchant. Breis moved forward and placed a hand on the man's shoulder to quiet him.

"Not so. I did you a favor by testing it. It's truly a marvel of workmanship to endure such a fall with only a single small dent. Well, two dents, but this other one is not quite as pronounced as the other." He swung about again, first giving Tymon a wink. As Breis spun, his elbow banged into more brassware on the table. The merchant yelped and grabbed to keep more of his valuable goods from cascading to the ground in a brassy torrent sure to ruin their value.

As all eyes fixed on the loudly protesting businessman, Breis stepped back and deftly pilfered a freshly baked loaf of rye bread from the next table.

"Look out!" Tymon bellowed, lumbering forward to bump the merchant as he struggled to corral the bouncing pieces of his brassware. This added diversion allowed Breis to snare still more of a repast. Seeing that the mission was successful, Tymon apologized insincerely to the merchant, backing away to shield his companion from the gimlet-eyed gaze of the baker whose products had vanished so mysteriously. As they strode away, Breis added other tidbits to their larder, quick hands darting both left and right.

"A meal fit for a king or even two vagrants such as we," Breis declared when they reached the safety of a deserted green outside the town's eastern gate, spreading out his ill-gotten gains to share with Tymon. A knife flashed and cut a piece of cheese in twain, half remaining before him and half sailing in the air toward Tymon, who easily snared it with his quick fingers. Gone now was all trace

of clumsiness on either's part.

"Wine, give me wine," muttered Tymon. "My throat is parched by this infernal heat." The small flask of wine stolen by Breis was emptied in a single gulp.

"Monsoon season comes soon to break the back of the heat demon crouching over Ostmarch," Breis said, feeling almost gleeful after his successful thievery.

"First intolerable heat, then drowning rains. Our misery never ends," complained Tymon, but his mood lightened as he finished the cheese and rye bread and turned to the several fruits Breis had pilfered.

"The wheel of the seasons turns endlessly," Breis said, his mind running along philosophic trails. "Perhaps we might roll with it and find amusement elsewhere. Ostmarch lacks opportunity at the moment."

"Ever since we returned, it has seemed a lonely place," Tymon said, turning gloomy again. He munched the fruit without a hint of cheer in his being. For three years they had wandered aimlessly, seeking only to forget their personal misfortunes. Tymon had lost his lovely, irrepressible and irreplaceable Tatiana, and a similar void had grown in Breis's soul at the loss of his dead Signe. Revenge for the dual murders had brought only the acrid taste of ash to their tongues, and wanderlust had not given birth to real acceptance of the momentous loss. If anything, revenge had erased their reason for living rather than restoring it.

For three years they had wandered aimlessly, seeking only to forget their personal misfortunes.

"If not Ostmarch, then where?" Breis thought aloud. He licked his fingers clean of the sticky juices from the green-striped yalt fruit from far-off Raemllyn before turning his attention to the crumbs remaining in front of him on the ground. Almost prissily, he wetted his forefinger and picked the crumbs up one by one, sampling each in turn as if it were the finest viand ever tasted.

"We have been everywhere, done everything," complained Tymon.

"There remains the thrill of serving nobly," came the voice from behind them. The ground rumbled and shook, parting a sword's breadth to vent noxious fumes. Both men jumped to their feet, hands flying to sharkskin-bound sword hilts. Tymon recognized their uninvited dinner guest before Breis.

"Illyeso," he said, his mood darkening further. "Your presence brings more wretchedness. What do you want of us?"

"Tymon," chided the wizard. "Is my acolyte so disconsolate that his master cannot request a small boon?" The ground split wider, revealing the wizard's face with its mesmerizing, fiery eyes. Beyond the wizard stretched a narrow passage leading into the bowels of the earth.

Breis crouched near the edge of the gaping chasm and stared at the smoldering rock lining the cavity. As if a huge burning poker had been thrust from the center of the world through the surface, so did this tunnel flow with molten stone. Illyeso Three-Fingers crouched on a tiny rock ledge, his huge body hidden under ribbons of yellow and blue silk that fluttered like a trapped cloud blown by unseen winds. He reached up, his hand with the two fingers missing appearing like a bird's claw. The wizard made a gesture, beckoning the men closer.

"Are you willing to fulfill a small task, in return for a reward beyond your dreams?" For reasons hidden to both Breis and Tymon, this offer caused Illyeso to chuckle. The effort to restrain his mirth caused new billows of silk to flutter upward and move sinuously.

"How small?" asked Breis. "And how far beyond my dreams will this reward be?"

"So small is the task that it shall give you scant trouble to achieve," Illyeso assured him. To Tymon, the wizard said, "The reward will be tailored to your current needs, specially chosen from all that I hold in my deepest caverns."

Tymon and Breis exchanged glances. Tymon shrugged. He had fallen into a depression from which little could bestir him. One hell resembled another. Breis was more inclined to discuss the matter with the cunning wizard.

"Your 'small tasks' prove dangerous beyond belief. Is any reward sufficient if we are no longer alive to enjoy it? The last cost Tymon his eye." Breis glanced over and saw his friend gingerly touching the fashionable fox-fur eye patch. How often had he complained of the aching hollowness and loss of depth perception after forfeiting the eye to the claw of a magical songbird Illyeso coveted for his own?

"You are learned, as if you were my own acolyte," Illyeso said. He coughed. His entire body shook like a disturbed bowl of treacle, ripples flowing sluggishly from one side and rebounding to return. "All I request of you is to read a message on a wall."

"A message?" Tymon snorted in contempt. "We are not your acolytes. We are not even your servants—and you pay us poorly, even when we do your bidding."

"Perhaps this message is more. Probably it is less. A symbol that must be copied precisely. A pictograph. I do not know, and therein lies the challenge. I must know. Soon." Illyeso ignored Tymon's protests and fixed his burning eyes on Breis.

"Where is this wall with the mystical inscription?" asked Breis.

"You are familiar with the gentle waves of the Outer Sea," said Illyeso. "North of World's End lies the Dismal Shore. Follow it for exactly five leagues, and there you will find a wall."

"A stone wall?" asked Breis. From the agitation shown by the wizard, Breis guessed the answer.

"This is part of the task. I am privy only to the location and the information that a message for me is inscribed thereon. It might be a towering wall raping the leaden skies of that sorry land or a crumbled wall easily stepped over, or, more likely, something in between. The nature of the writing is also unknown—until you return with this enlightenment." Behind Illyeso rose dense clouds of sulfurous

fumes that caused Breis to cough and draw a cloth over his mouth and nose.

"We'll do it," Tymon said without consulting his friend.

"Wait," protested Breis when Illyeso began to sink back into the earth. "I wish to—"

"Go. Find the inscription and return to me before the Year of Lost Virtue is commemorated," Illyeso said. His head bobbed frantically as the rent in the ground closed around him. Then the wizard jerked downward and vanished soundlessly, leaving the land unsullied by so much as a hollow. All that lingered was the throat-seizing miasma from the innermost regions of the world where Illyeso resided.

"We ought to have asked for money," said Breis. "How do we go on such an expedition to find anything as special as a wall without adequate supplies?" Sarcasm dripped from his every word. His fingers tapped restlessly on his sword hilt, and his foot beat out a cadence of irritation at the abrupt acquiescence of his friend.

"Tighten your belt. We've done it before."

"We'll be lucky if we don't have to eat our belts," Breis said, but he was pleased that Tymon appeared more animated. And, to his surprise, his own heart lightened at the prospect of adventure, even one authored by Illyeso Three-Fingers.

"World's End," Breis said, shivering in spite of layers of fur and heavy canvas sailcloth suborned into duty as a cape. Without discovery of the wrecked ship and the remains of cargo that had kept them alive thus far, they might never have reached the Outer Sea. They had left Ostmarch on the Day of the Snail in the Month of the Fire-Toad in the Year of the Roc and had only reached this most desolate and distant port after four months of arduous travel.

"Well named," Tymon said. He wore furs that left his arms bare. Breis wondered why the flesh did not freeze and turn his friend into a statue. Tymon's moods were still grim, and he tended to find ways to punish himself, as if his lover's death might be erased by his personal misery. In spite of this, Breis saw no evidence that Tymon fostered a death wish. Self punishment, perhaps, suicide, no.

"I could do with a mulled ale to warm my gut," Breis said, teeth chattering. "I could also do with a warm bed and a wench to share it and food. Yes, food! I have forgotten what real meat tastes like, much less bread or fine viands from warmer climes."

"You complain too much. Consider how quickly we reached this spot. We have a half year yet to march along the Dismal Shore and find Illyeso's wall."

"And then return to Ostmarch with our report," finished Breis. "Do you think he sent us on an undertaking that is merely uncomfortable? Pah!" Breis spat. The gobbet froze before it hit the ground.

"There might be some danger, I grant that, but what can live in this barren land? Even stout fellows clinging to the edge of life at World's End will present us with no challenge."

"My hands are so chilled I cannot even bend fingers around my sword hilt," complained Breis. "How can I defend myself in such conditions? Even the steel turns brittle from the cold." He tapped his blade. A curiously sonorous ringing sounded far longer than normal. The metal approached the point of breaking from the gelid winds and frosty temperatures.

"There's an inn that appeals to me," Tymon said, trudging through the thin ice and snow covering the harsh rock. Breis followed in his friend's footsteps, his boots swallowed by the larger man's prints. Tymon never broke stride as he pulled open the door and ducked inside the inn. The hot blast through the open doorway almost knocked Breis to his knees.

"Like a cudgel blow, it is," Breis gasped out. He fought to draw the heavy door closed behind him. Tymon already sat at a table talking with a burly brute twice Breis's size. Settling down without a word, Breis listened to the brief exchange. The innkeeper ambled away, in no particular hurry to fetch food or drink.

"What does he say about the wall?"

"He knows nothing of any wall, but he claims five leagues to the north is a lighthouse." Tymon frowned as he considered what he had learned. "A man and his wife tend the lighthouse and have for long years. They are quite crazy from loneliness."

"And the cold," suggested Breis. "What do they protect when no ship sails the frozen Outer Sea?"

"Who can say what bedevils them? They have toiled to keep the light burning for nigh on thirty years, or so says our benefactor."

"Benefactor?" Breis lifted an eyebrow at this description of the innkeeper. The man bathed only on holidays, and there was scant to celebrate in this northernmost port beyond which no ships sailed onto the Outer Sea.

"Where better to seek a wall than near the lighthouse?" Tymon asked. "Distances are as given by Illyeso. I feel the end of our search is at hand. We need only read the inscription and return straightaway to Ostmarch."

"What prize will Illyeso heap upon us?" mused Breis. "This quest seems far too simple, no matter how tedious it has been up to this point."

"We've been starved and frozen, almost killed by pirates, chased by salt leeches through swamps sucking us down to our chests, and this is not considering the sickness that beset us where we experienced strange sexual responses every time we sneezed." Tymon accepted a tankard of ale and downed it in a single long draft.

"As I said, a simple pilgrimage to the Dismal Shore," Breis said, thinking hard. He sipped at his ale until the warmth spread from his belly throughout his extremities.

"You headin' fer the lighthouse?" asked the innkeeper. "You won't be able to reach it fer another few months 'less you start right soon."

"Why is that, my good man?" asked Tymon.

"The storm. Every year it builds and

"Even stout fellows clinging to the edge of life at World's End will present us with no challenge."

begins to turn the whole land to a chilly lump on the arse of the god responsible for World's End."

"And which god might this be?" inquired Breis, always curious when matters of religion were mentioned. Too many times he had ignored minor gods and would-be godlings, to his later regret.

The innkeeper shrugged and said, "The icy breath blowin' off the sea tells the story. It'll be a cold one, this year. A very cold winter, indeed."

"Simple?" asked Tymon of his companion. "Illyeso has sent us into a frozen prison, unless we hurry."

"Then let's finish our task, so we can return to a place where we can even feel our lumps." Breis finished his ale and longingly looked at the few simple bumpkins seated around the room. Unassuming and rustic they might be, but they were not venturing into the cold night on a pointless task set by a wizard. He followed Tymon outside.

The lighthouse winked at Breis, a yellowed eye in the gloom.

"The Dismal Shore lies yonder," said Tymon, squinting as the breeze lashed across his face like a cat-o'-nine-tails. He shook himself, sending ice crystals flying like silver darts, and pointed into the murk.

Breis pulled the canvas sail cloak around his shoulders and trudged in the direction indicated by his friend. The land moving all too slowly beneath his boots proved to be loose gravel affording difficult footing, but Breis never flagged. To have done so would mean being left behind.

To his left stretched the Outer Sea, an expanse of water so briny and cold that naught survived longer than a heartbeat in its deadly embrace. Ships in ancient ages had traveled this sea, privy to secrets lost through the aeons. What sights had those mariners witnessed?

All Breis saw as his gaze slithered over the white-capped wave crests was the steel-gray maw of a sea waiting for the unwary. And above the waves churned storm clouds filled with pink and green lightning, silhouetting the rising sea in such a way that it appeared to grow arms reaching out for him. Breis shivered and pulled up his cape, directing his attention back to the rugged ground under him. There was no cause to worry about the Outer Sea. Not with solid land gritting beneath his boot soles.

"Ahead," said Tymon, after they had hiked more than ten hours. Breis had long since given up trying to determine distance along the Dismal Shore. Counting strides did no good since, all too often, gusts of wind forced them to seek cover until the birth pangs of the sea storm abated and again permitted them to hike without staggering.

The lighthouse winked at Breis, a yellowed eye in the gloom. The stone tower holding the lamp leaned precariously, the victim of the incessant blast hurling raindrops and sleet against it over the years. Once there had been a path leading to the lighthouse from a small stone hut nearby, but it was now overgrown with ankle-high salt weeds and drifted sand from the beach fifty yards away. Save for the incessant turning of the light atop the tower, the lighthouse appeared deserted.

"If the wall we seek is that of the tower," said Breis, "we need only examine it and—" A sudden gust of wind picked him up and flung him through the air. As he twisted in the airy grasp, he thought he saw something moving out to sea, a blackness that flowed and took on an animal shape before fading back into the underbelly of a storm cloud. Breis hit the ground so hard it chased away his senses for a moment.

"We can find shelter from the storm inside the lighthouse," said Tymon. "When it blows over, we can locate the wall and Illyeso's accursed inscription."

Breis tried to speak, but glass-jagged words jumbled in his throat. The fall had not been too extreme. He had endured far worse with less result, but the sight of the writhing, clawing creature inhabiting the underside of the storm clouds caused his brain to burn, as if held over a smithy's forge.

"Let me help you," said Tymon, a strong arm circling Breis's shoulders and lifting. The man's strength flowed into Breis so he could stumble along. As they followed the faint remnants of the path leading to the lighthouse, Breis stole glances out to sea, hunting for any trace of the wriggling monster he had seen in the clouds.

He saw only clouds. And lightning and the promise of heavy rains.

"The door's jammed," Tymon called over the howl of the rising wind. His thick arms bulged as he applied his full power to the balky wooden portal. Louder than the wind's wail came the creaking protests of the door opening. Tymon staggered when it gave way.

Breis wasted no time entering the sanctuary of the lighthouse. The cessation of wind due to the protection offered by the thick stone walls momentarily caused Breis to think he had gone deaf. Tymon's curses as he pushed into the lighthouse convinced Breis he was not.

"Help me close it," Tymon said. Together, they shut the sundered door, granting them further asylum.

"It is pleasantly warm inside," noted Breis. He stretched his half-frozen limbs and tossed back the thick canvas cloak he had worn far too long. He started to explore the interior. Here and there footprints disturbed the salty crust on the floor, but other than this faint evidence, Breis doubted anyone had crossed the threshold and climbed the spiraling stairs in many a month.

"Listen," Tymon said. "Above."

Breis strained to hear what his companion already had. The grinding of heavy cogged machinery rotating the lens and lamp momentarily defeated the distant wail of the storm again gaining force. But these were not the subtle sounds alerting Tymon. The sound of a man pacing, followed by an occasional curse, bespoke of human habitation.

"Does he live aloft?" asked Breis. "Mayhap he knows where we can find the wall mentioned by Illyeso."

"A hermit has little truck with outer concerns," Tymon said. "And who but a hermit would remain in such a tower?" He pressed his hand against the outer wall and dislodged a few stones.

"The innkeeper mentioned the

lighthouse keeper and his wife. I could do with a nicely cooked stew to warm my belly." Breis tossed back his furs and moved the hilt of his sword around for easy draw. For all his talk of savory stews made by a woman of the northlands, he expected danger rather than victuals on any table set above him.

Tymon preceded Breis up the stairs. Each step sent echoes up the lighthouse's inner shaft, but no one could detect their advance, not if they tended the creaking, grinding machines required to turn the eye-dazzling lamp. Breis lost count of the times the staircase twisted around. Two full turns, three—more. On the way they passed a small room where the lighthouse keepers lived. A quick examination as they hurried past convinced Breis that they sought only one in the lighthouse, not two.

"There, see?" Tymon indicated the man pacing in the lighthouse apex. Twice every minute the lighthouse keeper was limned in the intense glare, his shadow distorted into a caricature of a human being.

"Let's join our host," Breis said, pushing past Tymon. "It's warmer in front of the light, and I still experience some chilblain from our lengthy hike along the shoreline." Nimble feet took him the last few steps into the circular chamber atop the tower. For a moment, Breis wondered if the lighthouse keeper had somehow escaped and left him in an eye-searing trap.

Then he saw the man, hunched over and frail, pressed against the thick glass on the seaward side of the tower.

"I say, my good man," called Breis. "We seek—"

"The storm builds again. It has returned. I thought I'd vanquished it last season, but it has returned stronger than ever."

"What are you saying? What is 'it' that comes back?" asked Tymon.

"Look into the teeth of the storm," the old man said, anger animating his puny frame. A finger broken too many times stabbed out in the direction of the sea. "Tell me you do not see it!"

The challenge confused Breis, even as it caused a gnawing fear. He had seen a creature within the clouds, capering among the bolts of lightning. Or he had thought that when he had been blown to the ground and cracked his head.

"I see only clouds," Breis said uncertainly. He stared at the lighthouse keeper, taking in every detail of the demented man's appearance. A filthy, loose woolen robe brushed the immaculate floor of the chamber, giving the appearance that the old man did not move but rather glided like some ethereal being. The skeletal hand and sunken cheeks bespoke of long days without food of any kind. A thatch of tousled hair of indeterminate color in the brightness of the rotating lamp showed signs of having been pulled out in handfuls. From the look of the man's cracked and bleeding fingers, Breis realized the ancient confronting him was capable of not only violence but also self-inflicted outrage.

"It lurks. In thirty years never have I seen it so powerful, so confident," the old man grated out between cracked and blackened teeth. "The light fails. I must work to hold back the darkness." The man glided to a panel covered with levers and controls to begin work with no obvious result.

"There was a woman, your wife," spoke up Tymon in a tone more gentle than Breis expected from his friend. "The innkeeper at World's End mentioned her."

"Milla," sighed the old man, never turning from his self-appointed task. "She died. The night was furious black and the storm moved ever closer. I dared not leave my post when she fell sick. Milla helped keep the light turning that season. The world owes her a great debt. She kept it away for another season with her sacrifice."

Breis pressed his face to the thick window. He felt the storm buffeting against the far side. Across the Outer Sea writhed a hideous thing to which he could put no name. Description, usually so glib and easy, escaped him now. Eyes bored into his soul as talons raked the sky to send long actinic bolts of lightning sailing from cloud to cloud.

"What is it?" He gulped as he watched vaporous arms reach down and scoop up vast miles of ocean and hurl them in the direction of the lighthouse. The stone tower shook as the torrential wave struck.

"There are gods in Ostmarch," the old man said. "And there are gods of Ostmarch. There lies one of Ostmarch wanting desperately to be in that fair city. But it never will be. My faithful Milla and I have seen its evil. We held it at bay." He sobbed and mopped a tear with the sleeve of his robe. "It now falls upon these failing bones alone to hold it away from land. Once it reaches firm soil, nothing can stop the carnage."

"Is that so bad?" asked Tymon. He wiped condensation off the glass and peered at the approaching monstrosity.

"Yes!" hissed the lighthouse keeper. "It is voracious. It can never be sated. Endlessly will it eat. Your friend is hardly more than a morsel. Even you would not give it a full meal."

"It lurks. In thirty years never have I seen it so powerful, so confident . . ."

"There are other gods to stop it," Tymon said, growing uneasy at the sight of the horror sinuously moving toward the lighthouse.

"None will, none can," the keeper said with determination. "I know. My life, my dear Milla's, my parents, all have shown this is not possible. It is brutal. Brutal."

"Brace yourself!" cried Tymon. He spun and threw arms up to protect his own head. Breis hesitated only a fraction of a second in following his friend's lead. The wall of water racing toward the lighthouse struck with the force of a dozen storms. The lighthouse groaned like a living, tormented creature.

"The light! It cannot stand the light. This is all that keeps it away!" The lighthouse keeper swung the lamp about, amid protesting gears. But it was to no avail. A second wave crashed against the lighthouse and broke the glass. Breis saw a jagged shard rip through the lighthouse keeper's throat. Red spray mixed with

saltwater. As the wave retreated, it took the old man along as its due.

"The lamp," shouted Tymon. "We must aim it!" Tymon's strength was pushed to the limit as he wrestled the lamp about. The beam shone directly on . . . it.

Tymon stared into complete emptiness that suddenly developed teeth. He jerked back, but the creature had vanished. He heaved a sigh, then looked down and saw a thin tendril of mist curling up and over the brink formed where the lighthouse window had been broken. The gray mist snapped around like a whip and caught him by the leg. His powerful muscles turned to suet as he screamed in agony.

"It burns! No, it's freezing! My leg! Get me free!"

Emboldened by its attack, the monster surged upward and revealed itself once more. The flailing, misty tentacles sought to enwrap Tymon and pull him into a gaping maw of the purest ebony. Burning like malevolent watchfires, twin eyes squinting through fog fixed on Tymon as it concentrated on its victim.

Breis shouted with rage and fear as he whipped his sword around. He lunged, as if this might injure such a creature—such a godling. The blade tip danced out and touched an outstretched cloud-talon. The electric shock locked Breis's muscles in a massive spasm of pain. He jerked about, unable to release his sword, unable to do anything but experience ultimate fear as it sucked him into a maw of unimaginable black.

Sudden light shone on the thing in the storm cloud, causing it to shrink back. Breis heard Tymon cursing every god of Ostmarch as he directed the piercing brightness into the heart of darkness throbbing so close by.

"You drove it away," gasped Breis, freed from his rictus. "You did it!"

"No," Tymon said slowly. "You diverted it and I chased it back, but it still watches. See?"

Breis's bowels threatened to release when he saw it prowling back and forth only a few bowshots distant. The light had pushed it away and no more. Illumination had not vanquished the monster lurking in the storm cloud.

"Why doesn't it go around the lighthouse?" asked Breis.

"Magic," Tymon answered, as if this pronouncement gave the entire explanation. For all Breis knew, it was true.

"Then we must get the keeper to maintain the light." His words trailed off when he saw the bloody trail leading out the section of window glass broken by the tidal wave. He edged to the window and peered out—and down. Four dozen feet below lay the broken, crushed body of the lighthouse keeper.

"His duty is over," Breis said. "We should fetch his corpse and see that he is properly interred."

Breis's nose began to twitch. Then he sneezed. He rocked back when he realized mist condensed around him.

The creature had stealthily returned on mist-soft wings and worked to draw him into its gaping dark cavity.

Breis let out a bellow as he swung his sword, but he was enveloped in the cloud—the tightening cloud. The more he struggled, the harder it squeezed down on him.

He tried to cry out to Tymon but the mist clogged his nose, his mouth, slipped down his throat and entered his guts. Then the soft, damp fog turned to jagged saw blades both outside and within.

Breis felt his soul slipping away as he was spun around to look outward. The creature had stealthily returned on mist-soft wings and worked to draw him into its gaping dark cavity.

All his strength fled as he slid closer and closer to his demise. The lighthouse keeper had been lucky. He had merely died. Breis saw damnation for eternity following torture as he was pulled to the monster. Then, suddenly, the saw blades in his throat and belly that had formed out of the mist were ripped outward. Amid a spew of blood, he staggered away, free and bathed in brilliance.

Tymon had swung the lamp about and spotlighted him squarely.

"A serious question confronts us," Breis said, wiping gore from his lips with his sleeve. "How can we keep that vile, cunning creature away? If it slips past, it will feast for years on us land-dwellers."

"The lamp must remain lit," Tymon said, hand still resting on the light's frame. "That's no problem. These bricks burn with the brilliance of the sun. The keeper had a peculiar but effective mechanism for feeding them into a chamber where the radiance is produced."

"But the machine turning the light is broken!" protested Breis. He edged away from the break in the glass and stared at the brass gears beneath the lamp. Huge curling worms of shredded brass lay everywhere, the result of the frightful pressure placed against it by the winds from the stormy assault.

"I can manage," grated out Tymon, shoulders hunched with effort. He swung the huge lamp about to point directly at the godling.

"The wind always precedes it," Breis observed. "That will give you warning."

"I cannot continue this forever," protested Tymon. "My muscles already knot from the strain. Fix the contraption to sweep back and forth. That's the only way we can hope to drive it off."

"It," Breis muttered, giving the same inflection as the deceased lighthouse keeper. "There's no way to repair the ruin." His eyes darted past the ruined gears and went lower. Even there destruction proved the rule. As he studied the matter, wind built at his back. He turned into the gale and saw it coming again.

Breis dropped flat, letting Tymon turn the full light onto the advancing godling. Hideous shrieks ripped at his sanity, but the creature retreated again.

"Do something or it will slip past," Tymon growled. In spite of the cold, sweat beaded his forehead from the strain of moving the lamp.

"I can relieve you of some of the effort moving the lamp," Breis said. He dropped into the guts of the mechanism and pulled away the broken gears and pried free other jamming parts. This allowed Tymon to swing the

lamp about freely. It did nothing to alleviate the need to aim the light.

"The wind!" shouted Tymon above the hurricane force wind. The sheer force of the gale threatened to blow him from his post. He swung the lamp around and once more successfully drove off the monster in the clouds. How long could he do this, even if Breis repaired the broken gears to spin freely around the central shaft?

"I have an idea!" With that Breis abandoned Tymon, darted down the stairs, and recovered his discarded canvas cape. He took the steps leading back to the light chamber three at a time. He gathered braces and tubes, rods and fasteners, and then worked feverishly to fashion a sturdy mast with triangular crossbeams. He heaved his canvas cape over the beams and secured it the best he could.

"Loose the lamp," ordered Breis. "Let the wind catch my handiwork."

"What good is it, if the godling attacks from an angle?" asked Tymon. Then he saw. As the creature moved to one side of the lighthouse before attacking, the direction of the wind changed. The puff of breeze caught the canvas and swung the lamp, aiming it directly at the approaching monstrosity. It shrieked and retreated, changing its direction of attack. Again Breis's contraption worked. The wind twisted the lamp around, sending the dagger of light directly into the limitless black of the creature's heart.

"How long will this work?" asked Tymon, seeing how the brass and canvas creaked under the strain.

"Longer than either of us—or that poor wight—could ever endure," said Breis, again chancing a look at the lighthouse keeper's broken body. As he stared down, his eyes widened.

"Tymon, there, look. There! The wall!"

Tymon stood beside his friend, staring at a seawall running the length of the beach between the lighthouse and the churning sea. Glowing with eerie purple phosphorescence on the side of the wall was the symbol Illyeso required.

"Only this was inscribed on the wall?" demanded Illyeso Three-Fingers. "A single arrow pointing upward?"

"All," confirmed Tymon.

Illyeso rejoiced, his sun-bright eyes blinking rapidly with joy.

"You have done well. I—"

"There is the matter of the creature attempting to gain entry to the land," cut in Breis. "We were told it would come directly to Ostmarch and devour all the citizens."

"That? It is nothing. Your crude but effective device will chase it back for centuries."

"Canvas rots. Brass creeps. Metals turn brittle and shatter in the cold of the Dismal Shore. And what of the magical bricks feeding the lamp? Any part might fail."

"You surprise me," Illyeso said. "Your concern is touching."

"You will keep this thing at bay? It?"

"Worry no more of this matter. I have learned the symbol on the wall. That is the important part of this quest. Now, will you accept your reward?" Illyeso's eyes fixed on the pair.

"What is it?" Tymon asked cautiously. Too many times a wizard's bounty had proved deadly.

"Not gold, no, not that, but rather something more important to you. Dreams. I will allow you to rejoin your lost loves."

"Signe?" Breis recoiled in surprise when his lover appeared before him, misty but growing more substantial by the minute.

"Tatiana," Tymon said, taking a step toward a second apparition. "How?"

"Magic. They do not live, but you may be with them, lie with them, enjoy their company one more time," said Illyeso.

"For how long?" asked Breis.

Illyeso's bulk shifted in irritation. "Long enough. A few hours. Do you question this splendid prize?"

"Yes, yes, I do," Breis said. "I have fought to forget dead Signe. To linger with her and know it wouldn't be possible to do so again afterward—"

"To do so only at a wizard's whim," cut in Tymon, continuing his companion's argument. "No, we reject your reward." A muscle twitched in Tymon's neck, even as a tear rolled down Breis's cheek. In their denial of Illyeso's juicy plum they were in agreement. They had suffered over three long years. To reopen old wounds because of a wizard's spell was unthinkable and too cruel to bear.

Tymon and Breis turned and walked away from the crack in the ground where Illyeso had met them on their return to Ostmarch. The eastern gate road stretched into the city, beckoning them. Almost as invitingly as the outstretched arms of their two deliciously lovely—and dead—lovers.

Illyeso Three-Fingers uttered a magical incantation, then used one of his three fingers to trace the symbol in the air reported to him by Tymon and Breis. It glowed with a brilliance that forced the wizard to squint. Within this radiance grew a dot of blackness.

"You have won," came the softly purring voice from the center of utter darkness. "There will be another wager, but not this day." With that, the darkness faded into mere night.

On the ground lay a small coffer. Illyeso waddled to it and carefully unfastened the hasp. The lid lifted on silent hinges. From inside emanated a fierce blue glow.

"At last," exulted Illyeso. "Mine at last!" The wizard stared at the contents for a moment more, then gently closed the lid and tucked the simple wooden cask under his rivers of floating silk ribbon and hurried back to the safety of his deep caverns, ecstatic at the triumph won him by Tymon and Breis.

"You have won," came the softly purring voice from the center of utter darkness.

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Enlightenment can penetrate even the helm of iron. —Cuthbertine proverb

CAMPAIGN NEWS

FULLY OPERATIONAL DEATH STAR

The circle is pleased to announce that it is once again complete and is prepared to commence firing sequence upon Oerth. In a secret ceremony deep within the bowels of the netherworld, Craig Hier, formerly the Point of Contact for the Nyrond Triad, was promoted to the position of Circle member in charge of Nyrond and her Environs. At the end of the ceremony, which involved much screaming and sharp pointy things, Craig's first declaration was said to be "Wow, that hurt." This was followed directly by "I will make everyone pay for this." The current Circle composition and assignments of each of its members is listed below.

Metaregion I: Sheldomar Valley
Steve Conforti (scon40@aol.com)
Metaregion II: Tuflik, Fals, and Velverdyva Trade Route
David Christ (wavester@neo.rr.com)
Metaregion III: Iuz's Border States
Jason Bulmahn (IuztheEvil@aol.com)
Metaregion IV: Nyrond and Her Environs
Craig Hier (craig@hierview.com)
Metaregion V: The European and South African Mash
Creighton Broadhurst (creighton.broadhurst@ntlworld.com)

TAKING HER IN FOR THE 593 CY TUNE UP

As year two of the campaign draws to a close, the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign is more popular than ever. Our play statistics are higher than even last year's lofty numbers, and they're still increasing. LIVING GREYHAWK has become the most-played LIVING campaign in RPGA history, and we in the Circle believe that our campaign has become the standard against which all future organized play campaigns will be compared. The regional system has instilled local pride in players and created roleplaying opportunities for all. The past two and a half years have flown by, and hundreds of scenarios have been played by thousands of excited players. The campaign has had some growing pains, but we weathered them all fairly well and came out better for having gone through the experience. Now, 593 CY is fast approaching, and as some characters in the campaign near 10th level and beyond, some changes must be made to give the campaign's future a solid foundation.

Introduced at last year's WINTER FANTASY, Adventure Certs were a huge change in the way the RPGA handled the tracking of treasure and wealth in its LIVING campaigns. The certificates achieved some of the goals that were set for them and missed some others.

Over the past several months, the campaign staff has evaluated the successes and failures of Adventure Certs and has determined some changes to the system that must be made in order to allow the campaign to flourish in year three and beyond. To give you some insight into our thoughts, we've provided a short list of Adventure Cert benefits and problems that the new system will address.

Adventure Cert Benefits

- The ability to purchase items at home games or smaller game days without the need for a complicated Activity Center rules supplement or the oversight of campaign management.
- Grant players who do not travel or who do not live in regions with a high density of LIVING GREYHAWK activity similar benefits and opportunities for character diversity as are available to those who do.
- Discourage uneven treasure distribution and lengthy arguments of "who gets what" at the conclusion of every scenario.

Problems We'd Like to Address

- Remove Magicmart™ system of treasure distribution in which characters purchase anything they want from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The negative impact of such an open system is already being felt, and the Circle and Triads were concerned that, if allowed to continue, it would be detrimental to the long-term success of the campaign.

• Remove the need for complex and all-too-frequent "Total Equipment Value" computations, which are presently required each and every time you play LIVING GREYHAWK.

• Simplify the Adventure Cert as much as possible, lowering the campaign's barrier to entry.

• Try to breathe uniqueness into regions and PCs similar to that seen in the early months of the campaign.

The campaign staff has worked up the below changes, which will take affect as of January 1st, 2003. After the changes, we've included some tips on how you can convert your character to fit into the new system. Don't panic! It's a short process that will make keeping your character up to date much easier. Some of these changes might seem a little heavy-handed, but we believe it is best to make the changes quickly so that we can move forward in confidence rather than slowly addressing each of these problems as they get worse over a longer period of time.

LIVING GREYHAWK CAMPAIGN CHANGES

1. Adventure Certificates will now be referred to as Adventure Records to solve the confusing abbreviation issue (AC becomes AR).
2. As of January 1st, 2003, MagicMart™ is closed for business. Players may purchase items only from approved sources. Adventure Records and regional Meta-Orgs are two such places; others can be found in the *LIVING GREYHAWK* Campaign Sourcebook.
3. As of January 1st, 2003, all separate item and influence certificates leave the campaign. If you have an item certificate from a "Year One" scenario (591 CY), write the item on your last Year Two Adventure Record, write "converted" across the cert, and staple it to that Adventure Record. Any certs not "converted" to your last Year Two Adventure Record are lost when you play your first Year Three adventure. If you have influence certs from regional or core scenarios, check your region's website or contact your local Triad for information on how to convert them.
4. As of January 1st, 2003, you may change your character's home region once a calendar year, at the beginning of a campaign/calendar year. If you wish to change your character's home region, note the change on your first Adventure Record of the new year; you must change regions before you play your first event in the new campaign year. If you physically move at some point during the year and wish to change your character's home region to your new dwelling location, contact your new Triad for approval and instructions on how to make the change.
5. As of January 1st, 2003, the Magic Item Creation (MIC) rules have changed. You may now make items using the following guidelines:

• Potions from Table 8–18 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

• Scrolls of spells that you know. You may use metamagic feats when scribing scrolls, adjusting costs accordingly.

• Wands of spells that you know. You may use metamagic feats when creating them (with a maximum of 4th-level spells per the Craft Wand feat).

• You can create any item you can purchase as long as you meet the applicable prerequisites.

6. As of January 1st, 2003, the concept of signature items is removed from the campaign. Upon converting your character, all of his signature items become normal items. You can no longer change items' properties or upgrade their powers. Methods for improving items will be made available in scenarios.
7. Items owned will no longer be recorded on every Adventure Record. They will now be recorded on the Master Item List (MIL). See the *LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook* for more on the MIL.
8. Allowable items are now purchased at the table, either before or after the event. Related paperwork (gp spent, XP spent, and so on) is always completed at the end of the event.

Character Conversion for 593 CY

It's very easy to get your LIVING GREYHAWK character in compliance with the above rules. The following five steps will prepare you for play in the upcoming campaign year.

1. Print a copy of the Master Item List found at **www.living-greyhawk.com**.
2. Gather your certs from Year One (591 CY) and your last Adventure Record from Year Two (592 CY). Make sure your complete list of equipment is on your last 592 Adventure Record. Staple the old item certificates to your Adventure Record. This should result in a complete list of all items on your last 592 CY Adventure Record and on your basic equipment list (if you kept your list of mundane equipment from the *Player's Handbook* on a separate page).
3. List all items on your last 592 Adventure Record on the Master Item list. List the number of charges remaining for charged items.
4. Each item has a space called "Acquired AR#." This space is for the number of the Year Three Adventure Record from which you acquired the item. For all items you just wrote on your Master Item List, put "Year Two" in that space. Thus, all items acquired before January 1st, 2003 should be noted as having been acquired in 592 CY.
5. Attach your last 592 Adventure Record to your Master Item List as supporting documentation for your items. Have your first judge review your conversion and sign off on your Master Item List.

Done. It's that easy. You now have one sheet with all your items on it, and you do not have to rewrite them constantly. More details on this change can be found in the *LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook* that is available for download at **www.living-greyhawk.com**.

What is LIVING GREYHAWK?

LIVING GREYHAWK is the largest, most popular shared-world DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the RPGA Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by playing specially constructed adventures at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit **www.livinggreyhawk.com**

MASKS OF IRON

Agents of the Iron League

by Paul Looby and Creighton Broadhurst
illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

Many in the Flanaess once thought of the Iron League as a chain of reason restraining the madness of the Great Kingdom, its links forged of something stronger than Irongate steel: the dream of freedom. Now, that chain lies shattered. Yet the dream that gave birth to the Iron League still burns in the hearts of many, and hope stirs once more among the ashes of past glory.

THE FORGING

The Iron League was forged in the fires of the Turmoil Between the Crowns and tempered in the blood of the Aerdi chivalry whose pennants carpeted the red-stained field of the Battle of a Thousand Banners in 447 CY. There, before the walls of Irongate itself, the combined forces of the free peoples of the south crushed the hosts of the South Province.

As the pyres for the slain still burned, Irongate, Onnwal, Idee, and the dwur of the Iron Hills signed a pact of mutual aid and fraternity that came to be called the Iron League. Under its terms, each member was bound to protect and assist his fellows from the aggressions of the Great Kingdom and the fell ambitions of the Overking.

In 448 CY, the Lords of the Isles pledged their oath to the League. Sunndi had to wait another seven years before rebels armed and aided by the League rose up and slaughtered the Imperial garrisons and nobles loyal to Rauxes.

THE JADE MASK

The south was now free—but it faced a determined foe with powerful armies that far outnumbered the combined forces of the free states. Where might of arms could not prevail, stealth and guile would redress the balance. The rulers of the Iron League states created a shadowy organization they called the Jade Mask, populating the group with some of the most skillful saboteurs, burglars, and professional liars in all the southeast Flanaess. Outwardly, the Mask appeared to be no more than a diplomatic corps tasked to foster cooperation between the members of the League and to represent their interests abroad. In fact, it was one of the most extensive spy networks on the continent.

The Jade Mask consisted of several chapters—one based in each Iron League state and another devoted to matters beyond the borders of the League. The Home Chapters dealt with threats to their home state, overt and covert, internal and external. Each member adopted different guises to blend into the cultures and societies of his homeland; few beyond the land's sovereign and his closest ministers were aware of the existence of Jade Mask agents in their midst. The Foreign Chapter's remit was limited only by the known boundaries of the Flanaess. Where the League's diplomats and merchants went, so too went the Mask's agents and spies.

A shadowy group known as the Twelve oversaw the Jade Mask. Comprised of two officials selected by the rulers of each member state of the League, the Twelve's mandate was to act at their discretion to preserve the security and liberty of the states of the League by whatever means it deemed necessary. This they did with ruthless efficiency.

THE CHAIN SUNDERED

The most dangerous threat to the Iron League came not from within, nor even from Aerdy. In 576 CY, the Mask's agents reported the arrival of envoys from the Land of Purity in the courts of the south. Despite strenuous efforts, the Mask discovered little about either the newcomers or their homeland. While the number of agents that disappeared in the sweltering south troubled the Twelve, the War of the Golden League, a conflict pitting Aerdy and South Province against Nyrond, Almor, and the Iron League, soon monopolized their attention. The enigmatic monks were forgotten.

Outfoxed by a far more effective and insidious spy network, the Twelve and their agents were among the first to fall beneath assassins' knives when the Scarlet Brotherhood struck during the Greyhawk Wars. The Chapters in Onnwal, Idee, and the Isles were all but eliminated in a single night—in some cases by double agents striking from within. The headquarters of the League in Irongate saw the worst of the slaughter, with at least seven of the Twelve falling to agents of the Scarlet Sign.

Irongate was saved by her Lord Mayor Cobb Darg, who had not been blind to the tentacles of the Scarlet Brotherhood encroaching on his city. The following morning, the bodies of nearly 60 Brotherhood agents hanged from gibbets before the city hall, while three merchant vessels—and their hidden cargo of Brotherhood troops—blazed in the harbor. Though Irongate had been saved, the League was shattered. Disgraced and defeated, the Jade Mask faded into obscurity.

THE LEAGUE REFORGED?

A small group of loyal Jade Mask agents declared themselves the new Twelve in Irongate in 585 CY, reaffirming the oath of the Iron League in the presence of Cobb Darg, a delegation of Sunnd nobles, and representatives of the dwarven kingdoms of the Glorioles, Hestmark Highlands, and Iron Hills. The leaders of this new Jade Mask promised to operate differently than the previous leaders, whose policies had failed so disastrously during the Greyhawk Wars. Many of the new Twelve belonged to a cult known as the masks of Johydee, who honored the so-called Hidden Empress of Oeridian myth who, through deception and guile, freed the race from the influence of evil gods centuries before the Great Migrations. The cult had been prevalent among the human members of the Jade Mask, but after the death of their more public companions, they stepped forward from the shadows to set new goals for the order.

Primary among these goals are the liberation of those League states still enslaved by the Brotherhood and the reformation of the Iron League as a military and political alliance. Another key goal is the defense of Oeridian peoples and heritage from the insidious peril of the Scarlet Brotherhood on one hand and from Ahlissa on the other. The Twelve and their agents realize that ultimate Brotherhood victory will mean the utter destruction of the Oeridian people. Masters of disguise in their own right, the Twelve easily see through the fair guise Overking Xavener presents to the world, glimpsing the unbounded avarice, ambition, and evil that lies beneath. According to the new Jade Mask, Xavener and his ilk are despoilers of the great destiny promised the Aerdi in ancient times and no less of a threat to the future of the Oeridian people than the Brotherhood.

The Twelve's first move was to reform the Mask's shattered chapters. In Onnwal, Jade Mask agents acted in concert with the forces of Free Onnwal, helping to bring about the Brewfest Rebellion of 586 CY. In Idee and the Lordship of the Isles, agents form a hidden but essential part of the resistance movements, especially among the oppressed Oeridian nobility of the Isles. In Sunndi, the Mask is active in rooting out Ahlissan spies as well as infiltrating its own agents across the long border with the United Kingdom to report on events in the courts of Kalstrand, Rel Astra, Eastfair, and beyond.

The reformed Jade Mask has its critics. After years of disagreement, relations with Cobb Darg appear strained. The Twelve wonder how the Lord Mayor uncovered the Brotherhood plot in his city when they did not and why he did nothing to warn them and the other member states. Some agents have begun delving into Darg's enigmatic and largely unknown past. Rumors of tensions between the Mask and the archmage Bigby abound, but the particulars of the situation remain unknown.

Both King Hazendel and the dwur of the Iron Hills have expressed disquiet at the influence the Johydeens have had upon the Jade Mask, chafing at their placement of the preservation of Oeridians before all others. The Olvenking has pointed out the similarity in this outlook with that of the Scarlet Brotherhood, noting that it is the fate of fanatics to become that which they most despise. On such matters of criticism, the Jade Mask has maintained its usual, inscrutable silence.

NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: MASK OF JOHYDEE

The faith of Johydee is an ancient one, and her followers are scattered across the Flanaess. Many sages speculate that members of the masks of Johydee can be found in lands far from the Iron League, but certainly the greatest concentration inhabits the southeastern Flanaess. Adopting many different guises, masks serve as the hidden guardians of the Oeridian people. They prefer to use the weapons of their foes against them, following the ancient example of Johydee. (In ancient times, the Hidden Empress tricked the Lords of Evil to fashion for her a mask that allowed her to take any shape, which she then used to rescue her people from thralldom.) Given their very nature, it is unknown whether the masks represent a vast network spanning the Flanaess or merely isolated individuals quietly fighting their own private wars against the enemies of all things Oeridian.

Masks of Johydee often serve as spies for armies or the nobility, capitalizing on their dedication to subterfuge and disguise while quietly pushing a pro-Oeridian agenda. Most

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Bonus language: Ferral	1	-	-	-	-
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3		2	-	-	-	-
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Mask thoughts	2	1	-	-	-
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4		3	2	-	-	-
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Persuasive	3	2	1	-	-
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5		3	3	2	-	-
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Trustworthy	4	3	2	1	-
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Alluring	4	3	3	2	-
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	*Alter self* 3/day	4	4	3	2	1
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	*Mind blank*	4	4	3	3	2

believe that their daring exploits, secret missions, and narrow escapes please Johydee. Prized by their benefactors as peerless agents, those who know of the cult know enough to respect their ability and fear their reach. Rogues, fighters, and rangers dominate the rank and file of the cult, with the somewhat more rare clerics serving in positions of authority.

NPC masks of Johydee usually work alone, and they can serve as both allies and adversaries to player characters (and sometimes both at the same time). They often have powerful political allies who can pull the right strings to get them in and out of danger with relative ease. Though as a whole dedicated to good, masks of Johydee can be ruthless in their double-crossings.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a mask of Johydee, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Neutral good.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Disguise: 6 ranks.

Gather Information: 6 ranks.

Spot: 4 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Bluff, Diplomacy, or Gather Information).

Special: The character must be an ardent worshiper of Johydee and must speak Old Oeridian.

Mask of Johydee Class Skills

A mask of Johydee's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb

Dex: Disable Device, Hide, Move Silently, Open Locks.

Con: –

Int: Appraise, Decipher Script), Read Lips.

Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the masks of Johydee prestige class:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A mask's training focuses on small and easily concealable weapons. All masks are proficient with the crossbow (light or hand), dagger (any type), dart, handaxe, light mace, sap, shortbow, short sword, sling, throwing axe, and rapier. They are proficient with light armor and shields.

Spells: Masks of Johydee may prepare and cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the mask must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. Masks of Johydee with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Mask of Johydee bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + Wisdom modifier. Masks have access to any spell in the Mask of Johydee Spell List sidebar and can freely choose which to prepare, just as a cleric does (although the mask of Johydee cannot use spontaneous casting to substitute a cure spell in place of a prepared spell).

Bonus Language: As part of his initial training, a mask of Johydee learns the ancient Oeridian tribal language of Ferral. Long forgotten to the rest of the world, agents of the Iron League use the language to communicate reports and orders, zealously keeping its existence and meaning secret to all but the uninitiated. A dead language originally used to bark orders on the field of combat, Ferral is ill-equipped to handle emotions or modern concepts.

Mask Thoughts (Ex): At 3rd level, a mask gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects from the Enchantment school, since his training enables him to better resist mind-affecting attacks.

Persuasive (Ex): At 5th level, a mask gains a +2 bonus to all Bluff and Intimidate checks.

Trustworthy (Ex): At 7th level, a mask gains a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks.

Alluring (Ex): At 8th level, a mask gains a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy checks and to the save DCs of her mind-affecting, language-dependent spells.

***Alter Self* (Sp):** Masks of Johydee of 9th level or higher can tap into the power of Johydee's fabled mask, granting them the spell-like ability to cast *alter self* up to three times per day.

***Mind Blank* (Sp):** At 10th level, a mask of Johydee gains the ability to cast *mind blank* once per day.

Mask of Johydee Spell List

1st: *Change self, comprehend languages, detect chaos/evil/good/law, detect undead, endure elements, obscuring mist, protection from chaos/evil/good/law, sanctuary, shield of faith*

2nd: *Aid, alter self, augury, find traps, invisibility, resist elements, shield other, undetectable alignment, zone of truth*

3rd: *Dispel magic, glyph of warding, locate object, magic circle against chaos/evil/good/law, magic vestment, nondetection, obscure object, protection from elements*

4th: *Confusion, discern lies, divination, freedom of movement, holy smite, repel vermin, sending, spell immunity, status*

5th: *Break enchantment, commune, dispel evil, false vision, scrying, spell resistance, true seeing*

DRAGON

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Dungeoncraft

Running Large Encounters

by Monte Cook

The player characters have infiltrated the evil temple of Asharte, and they have entered the main sanctuary—a room with three levels. On the first level, a long gallery blocked off by walls of iron bars holds a few mercenary archers. The PCs can't get at the archers easily, and the archers can't move out of the gallery.

On the second, main level, evil priests conduct a ritual, intoning words of praise to their evil goddess. The PCs can reach this level via a small flight of stairs (all the while under fire from the archers in the gallery). The clerics don't leave this level because they are busy with their ritual and don't want it disturbed. There are, however, some guards and mercenaries who come down from this level to fight the PCs if the PCs don't come to them, although spellcasters might remain here and cast spells no matter where the PCs are.

Lastly, on a small, very high level—a sort of perch—the leader of the evil cult, high priest Erdonath, has taken up position to launch spells at intruders. He doesn't leave this spot. If the PCs want to fight him, they've got to figure out a way to get up there.

To top it all off, the players, knowing they'd be getting into a huge fight, called up some of their friends to play and enlisted the help of some allied NPCs. Now there are fifteen PCs and NPCs invading the temple, and about twenty-five defenders. How can a DM possibly run such a huge battle without it bogging down (or without him going insane)?

The answer is: very carefully.

PREPARATION

Last month, this column covered preparing for a large encounter. It discussed putting NPCs on cards, noting their actions ahead of time, and preparing your materials (as well as staging the encounter so that there's plenty for everyone to do and other tips). This month, we'll discuss actually playing through the encounter and how it can go more smoothly.

Prepare for the PCs

Just like you did with the NPCs ahead of time, at the beginning of the session, jot down basic information about each PC onto a separate note card. Don't worry too much about putting notes about the PC's hit points or details on there (but you can do that if you want), because in a big encounter you've really got to rely on the players to deal with their own characters.

While you're doing this, have the players read the sidebar in the *Player's Handbook* on page 126 (if they haven't done so already). The tips there on speeding up combat are invaluable if you can get your players to use them. You will be amazed how much faster things go if the players roll ahead of time, roll their attacks and damage at once, and keep track of their own spell durations. Even if only some of the players do this, it speeds things up. The problem is that the people who are going the extra mile to help you out (and help the game move faster) are the people who thus get less time in the game focused on them and their actions. These players might end up feeling penalized for doing the right thing. So be aware of this tendency, give each player an equal portion of your attention, and try to get all the players to help the game move faster.

Once you have all the PCs' cards ready, have the players roll initiative (or make those checks ahead of time yourself as the *Player's Handbook* sidebar suggests—be aware, though, that some players might not like this), and roll initiative for all the NPCs. Put the cards you have prepared for the PCs and the NPCs in initiative order. Now, you can cycle through the rounds by shuffling through the cards, in order, one at a time. This keeps track of initiative, and it brings up each NPC's card as you need it. Record all relevant information on the NPC's card, such as damage taken, spells used, and so on. When someone is taken out of the battle, remove the card from the stack (thus, as the encounter moves along, the card stack gets smaller and smaller, and the combat moves quicker and quicker—which is exactly the sort of pacing you want to have).

Visual Aids

While it's always handy to use some sort of visual aid in a fight or important encounter, the use of miniatures, counters, or a sketch to show where the PCs are in relationship to each other and to the NPCs is vital.

It's also vital to represent the layout of the room. With a large combat, it's imperative that you and the players know where the PCs and the NPCs are. You can accomplish this by using miniatures or counters to represent characters, sketching the room on a large piece of paper so that everyone can see it, or using a whiteboard. It doesn't really matter what you use as a visual aid as long as it is clear to all the players. Use whichever method suits your taste and budget.

It is also helpful, "behind the screen" so to speak, to keep track of your NPCs. If there are six mercenary archers, and one of them suffers damage from a PC's thrown spear and another is immobilized by a *hold person* spell, you've got to be able to keep track of which is which. In addition to the representation you've got for the players (using miniatures, counters, or whatever), draw a sketch for yourself that only you can see. It doesn't have to be clear—you're the only one that needs to understand it. Fill this sketch with notes to yourself. You can make it clear that the mercenary in the middle is held while the one closest to the north wall has suffered some damage.

Keep Things Moving

Don't linger on NPC actions. Don't worry about them making all the right decisions. It's the heat of battle.

Don't stop to have rules arguments (or discussions). Make players look up rules themselves while it's not their turn. Make your own adjudications quickly and decisively. Worry about defending your decisions or listening to players' objections outside of the game.

Don't let players interrupt with irrelevant comments or discussions. In a large group, it's okay for two players, who have to wait a few minutes for their turn, to diverge into a short discussion regarding a movie one saw last week or an old gaming story that suddenly came to mind, but they shouldn't involve the DM or the player whose turn it is in this divergence. You don't want to be draconian, but you can't let your busy session get interrupted or sidetracked, either. Further, it's good if players are aware enough of what's going on in the encounter so that when their turn comes along, you don't have to recap what happened while they weren't paying attention. It's best, in fact, if they know that their turn is coming and have already decided on their actions and made their rolls.

Let the PCs Do Their Thing

While this is true in encounters big or small, it is particularly true in a large, intensive encounter: Let the PCs use their abilities. Don't worry if the PCs get a lucky roll (or an NPC gets an unlucky save), or use really smart tactics and take out an opponent you'd hoped would be a big challenge. There are so many opponents in the fight that no single creature makes that much of a difference, and when the PCs use their powers to good effect, it makes the game more fun. Even if the PCs overcome a challenge more easily than you think they would or should, the next one is sure to be challenging.

For example, say one of the opponents you designed to help defend the evil temple of Asharte is a blackguard with a powerful, unique magic sword that you created from scratch. He's one of the most powerful of the NPC opponents you've got going in the temple, and you expect him to be one of the major challenges the PCs will face. The PCs enter the temple, and the wizard casts *dominate person*. You roll a saving throw for the blackguard and he fails. Roll with the punches. Don't fudge the roll or get flustered or upset. Obeying the wizard's commands, the blackguard turns on a priest. It's no less interesting an encounter, and the wizard's player feels satisfied that he's used a powerful spell to good effect. Of course, one of the priests can cast *dispel magic* and potentially free the blackguard, reversing the situation—making for an encounter where the tide turns back and forth, which can be exciting.

End With a Bang

When you've staged a big, epic encounter, don't let it peter out, and don't let it become agonizingly long. Know when it's over. If the PCs have wiped out everyone but a couple of mercenary hirelings, don't drag things out. Either have the mercenaries run away, have them surrender, or let them die in battle quickly. Prolonging the inevitable, when the whole encounter was already long and involved, creates an unsatisfying ending.

The real end should be the important part—the defeat of the main foe(s), the ending of the ritual, or the PCs' narrow escape, as the encounter dictates. Once it's over, let it be over. If the high priest Ardonath is dead and the ritual is stopped, the encounter is finished, even if two mercenaries and one fledgling priest remain. If the PCs run from the overwhelming odds and get away, the encounter is finished. Players appreciate the sense of closure, and like in a movie, will take well to the game moving to the next "scene."

The Dénouement

After a large encounter, there is probably going to be a lot of activity afterward—plan for this. The PCs are going to want to heal their wounded, and—assuming they were victorious—search their fallen enemies, search the area, and question the prisoners (if any). If there are a lot of players involved, the process of dividing up treasure (after it has all been identified and appraised) can be a lengthy and complicated one. In truth, this is a situation where the DM should back off. The players should divide up the spoils however they wish. Your only role is to settle disputes and make sure that no hard feelings are generated.

Expect that the PCs will want to examine the area, and be ready to handle that quickly. Just as you don't want the last bits of the fight to get bogged down "mopping up the underlings," you don't want the excitement of the encounter to get lost in the aftermath with a tedious, time-consuming search. Let the PCs secure the area and find what they need to find. Generate a list for them quickly of what they have found. Consider ending the session right there, with few loose ends left hanging. It gives the players the chance to digest the fun that they had in the encounter and think about what to do next—with the loot, with the prisoners, or in the context of the plot of the adventure. Cliffhangers are great sometimes, but so are endings. A mixture of both from session to session is most satisfying.

the Play's the thing

Mysterious Magic

by Michael Mearls

Magic is a bizarre, otherworldly force that can move mountains, annihilate armies, and shape the course of history. Yet, sometimes players treat it with the same respect reserved for empty vials, 10-foot poles, silver mirrors, and other useful but disposable tools. This article presents a simple method for using verbal descriptions and a few other tricks to move a group's focus away from the game mechanics behind magic spells and onto the wondrous effects magic can have. Rather than simply announce that a wizard is using *cone of cold*, you can quickly and easily build a description of the spell's effects that leave the spell's name and purpose uncertain. Using these methods, magic becomes less predictable and much more mysterious, all without changing a single game mechanic.

Describing Spells

The easiest way to make magic more mysterious is to replace the in-game descriptions of a spell's mechanics with in-character descriptions of the spell. Instead of announcing that your sorcerer casts *fireball* and rolling for damage, describe the searing orb of fire your character flings at his enemies and the thundering roar that echoes through the room as it detonates and fills the area with flames. Such a description helps everyone at the gaming table draw a clearer, fresher picture of the action. Plus, cutting out references to the rules leaves some doubt about the spell's exact nature.

The easiest way to create descriptions of spells is to read through their rules and note their effects. In most cases, a description writes itself, such as the *fireball* example given above. Other times, a spell might operate in such subtle ways that the rules cover only its effects, not its appearance. A cleric casting *hold person* might not give any sign of the nature of his spell until someone notices his victim standing rigidly in place. Rather than announcing your character's action and asking for a Will save, demand the saving throw first, and then tell the players what their characters see. Not only does this make a spell's identity harder to pin down, but the other players feel a lot more tension over saving throws since they can never be sure if they're rolling to resist something minor, like *sleep*, or a powerful spell such as *charm monster*.

Customizing Spells

Using descriptions of spells is a good first step, but sooner or later, the same descriptions used over and over again bring magic back to a mundane state. Once the players have seen one *fireball*, they've seen them all. To get around this, create custom descriptions for each caster's spells. One wizard's *magic missile* does not need to look the same as another's. Creating custom descriptions for spells is a great way to make a character unique and gives him a memorable feature.

Read over a spell's effects and determine its net result. Once you have decided exactly what a spell can do in game terms, think of a cool, eye-catching way to describe how the spell manifests. As long as the effect you build in no way alters the spell's rules and game function, the description can be almost anything that fits the spell's effects. To help get you started, here are some basic ideas on the forms that these descriptions can take.

Creation: The caster creates a shimmering, magical construct that completes the spell's effect. These descriptions work best with spells that normally lack any catchy, obvious signs. Think of the spell's final result, imagine an item, creature, or other object that could produce that effect, and describe how the caster creates and directs the object to fulfill the spell. For example, a cleric who uses *hold person* might generate a pair of glowing, silver nails that he hurls toward his target. The nails drive into the target's feet and fill her with agonizing pain that either roots her to her spot or forces her to pull her feet free and resist the spell.

Manifestation: These descriptions highlight the caster's role in the spell, creating links between the spell's effect and the caster's manipulation of the magical forces used to produce them. Perhaps whenever a sorcerer casts her *wall of ice* spell, his eyes turn utterly black, and anyone standing near him feels a freezing cold breeze. Once the wall is complete, the sorcerer's hands are left covered in a thin layer of ice. An elf wizard might call a glowing, green longbow into existence to fire *Melf's acid arrow* at his enemies.

Proxy: Spells described in this manner rely on the assistance or works of some outside figure to complete them. A druid who uses

barkskin might cause bark from a nearby tree to animate, remove itself from the tree's trunk, and encase her in a layer of thick, woody armor. One problem with these descriptions is that if the source of the spell, such as a tree from the above example, is not present, it might strain the players' suspension of disbelief. These descriptions work best for NPCs normally found in a specific environment or if used in conjunction with other descriptions.

Transformation: When using a spell, the caster somehow changes to create the spell effect. A wizard who uses *mage armor* might develop thick, scaly skin, while a cleric's *bull's strength* could cause the recipient to grow bulging muscles that strain his belt straps. Some spells could transform the caster and grant him the ability to produce the spell's effect. A sorcerer who casts *fireball* could temporarily gain a dragon's maw and spit a burning ember that detonates on impact.

Themes

To help lend your caster (or campaign world) a sense of consistency and to make creating new descriptions for a particular character easier, pick a single, unifying theme that manifests in all your character's spells. For example, a cleric of a fire god could create and shape magical energy that looks like shimmering flames. His *detect evil* causes him to see a halo of ebony fire around evil creatures, while *divination* takes the form of visions he sees within a campfire. A theme lends consistency to a character's magic and helps focus his personality, background, and abilities. You can easily create separate, competing schools of magic merely by altering how a group of wizards' spells appear compared to the same spells used by a different group. The wizards of the Great Order of Thule rely on magic drawn from demonic creatures to defeat their foes, while the Esoteric Alliance of Ganz teaches that true magic flows from elemental earth. Wizards from both orders might use *ice storm,* but one casts a spell that summons a frost demon to pelt his enemies with chunks of ice, while the other opens a gate through which hurtle ice-encrusted rocks and chunks of earth.

Ancestry: Something in the character's past helps to define his magic. Perhaps a cleric's magic channels traits from her forefathers, granting her the strength of a warrior ancestor when she casts *bull's strength* or calling upon her ancestral guardians to smite her enemies with *searing light* or *flame strike.* When using a spell, a sorcerer could temporarily gain traits associated with the ancestral source of his magic, be they dragons, demons, celestials, or some other powerful, magical race. These traits either produce a spell's effects directly, such as *endure elements* causing a caster to develop a thick, demonic hide, or indirectly, like a *poison* spell that manifests as a barbed stinger that sprouts from the caster's index finger.

Deity: An obvious choice for clerics and druids, this theme involves a particular god's symbols, myths, and other important icons. A *magic weapon* spell could cause the enchanted armament to physically change to appear as the god's favored weapon, though it retains its original characteristics. Spells that grant a creature enhanced abilities or defenses alter the target to take on the god's characteristics or visage. A cleric who uses *divine power* transforms into a powerful hero or crusading saint from his deity's myths.

Element: One of the four elements, air, earth, fire, or water, could serve as the source of a character's magical abilities. All of her spells feature some indication of this link, even if the element does not play a direct role in the spell's function. For instance, a fire mage's *web* could manifest as a swarm of flickering, gray flames, while a water wizard's *haste* could appear as a stream of shimmering liquid that coats the spell's target and imbues its effects upon him.

Totem Creature: Drawing on the traits and abilities connected to a wild animal, the caster's magic could appear in the form of a specific creature, or it could grant him an animal's traits. A good choice for rangers and druids, this theme can be used to forge a connection between a character and a specific creature or a broad type of animal. The caster could summon a spectral animal that fulfills a spell's effects, such as a *flaming sphere* that manifests as a fiery bear or a *magic missile* that appears as a small flock of soaring eagles. Other spells could cause the recipient's appearance to change so that it resembles the caster's totem animal, granting him a few animal traits that reflect the spell's effects.

Changing Themes

As a caster gains experience, her theme can change to reflect her better grasp of magic. This provides a convenient excuse to add new ways to describe spells to your repertoire. For example, a druid whose spells highlight her connection to a wolf totem could take up a new, stronger totem, the grizzly bear, to reflect her increased skills and her greater responsibility to protecting a forest. As a campaign progresses, even a slight change to your themes and spell descriptions can help enforce a sense of mystery and keep things fresh. The same descriptions used again and again can eventually become stale.

Class Abilities, Skills, and Feats

Not only can spell descriptions help enliven magic, but they can also help inject some mystery and color into a spellcaster's other abilities. Simply apply the process outlined above to abilities a spellcaster gains in addition to his spells. For example, a barbarian/druid whose magic draws on a snake totem could gain serpentine traits when he enters his rage. His skin grows scales, fangs sprout in his mouth, and his eyes turn into a snake's. Other class abilities could gain similar traits. When a rogue/wizard makes a Hide skill check, the shadows around her seem to melt and flow to help conceal her from view. The

character's skill check receives no modifiers for this effect, but it explains how an arcane caster could become adept at sneaking into heavily guarded areas. By the same token, an otherwise mundane feat could have an arcane or divine origin. When a cleric uses Dodge, a divine, invisible guardian knocks aside an attack. Again, the feat's rules and net effect remain the same, but the description of its function helps highlight the cleric's close bond with his deity.

Spontaneous Descriptions

Over the course of play, you might find a great opportunity to introduce a new description for a spell. As long as you do not try to alter the spell's effects, go for it. A wizard's *scare* spell could suddenly manifest as a gleaming, shining cat to spook a pack of dire rats. If you see a chance to alter a spell into a form that fits the current scene and your character's opponents, use the guidelines here to make the spell more interesting and improve everyone's enjoyment of the game.

Using Spell Descriptions in Play

While creating new ways to describe your spells can help customize a character, it should never interfere with the flow of play. Your spells can be mysterious to the players, but your DM needs to know what you are up to. The easiest way to handle this is to use a set of index cards to keep track of your spells. Write down the basic rules for a spell, such as its save DC and effects, along with one or more descriptions you use with it. When you cast a spell, you can refer to the card to remind yourself how to describe it and then simply hand the card to the DM to allow him to resolve the spell's effects. This way, there is a barrier between your spell and the game rules from the players' point of view, but your DM knows what's going on.

Obviously, when using spell descriptions as a DM, you never need to worry about losing track of which spells an NPC is using. However, even if your players do not use spell descriptions, the index cards can help speed up play by cutting down on time spent looking up spells in the *Player's Handbook*.

Always remember that spell descriptions are there to make the game more engaging. They serve a roleplaying purpose but should not interfere with the game's rules unless your DM expressly decides otherwise. A cleric of the god of winter whose *hold person* coats his enemies in a thick layer of immobilizing ice should be able to use that spell without restriction in a desert. The spell's manifestation merely reflects the source of its magic. Taking a torch to a creature frozen in place by *hold person* should not melt him free. The spell's rules still apply as normal.

Example

Tylsika is a 3rd-level wizard of the Great Order of Thule. The general theme to her magic is that her spells summon and bind demons to produce magical effects. Here's how her player customizes a few of her favorite spells.

Web produces a sticky mass of material that holds creatures in place, fills an area for quite some time, and can be burned away with fire. Tylsika's *web* spell summons a horde of tiny demonic insects that form a swarm in the spell's area. They create a dense mass that holds creatures in place within it. However, the demons are terrified of fire and flee from it.

Chill touch drains hit points and Strength with a touch attack. Tylsika's *chill touch* spell summons a tiny demon with a long, barbed tail that perches on her hand. When Tylsika touches an enemy, the demon stings her foe and delivers the spell's effects.

Shield produces a barrier that improves AC. When Tylsika casts it, a group of small, flying demons appears around her. They flutter about and intercept attacks, swallowing arrows fired toward her and blocking sword blows with their bodies. As the spell nears the end of its duration, the number of flying demons around her dwindles.

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DM's toolbox

Running Ready-Made Adventures

by Johnn Four

Published adventures are fantastic DM tools that can save you time and help you run organized, consistent, and fun adventures. They can also teach you a lot about creating adventures of your own. Most published adventures require some preparation time, longer and more complicated adventures requiring more effort to prepare. This article presents tips to help you prepare to run a published adventure. Depending on your style, the length of the adventure, and the amount of time you can invest in preparation, use whichever tips are the most helpful for you, adding your own steps and ideas as needed.

Skim The Adventure Cover To Cover

The first thing you want to do when preparing to run a published adventure is glance briefly through it in its entirety, familiarizing yourself with the adventure's contents. This will help you learn what you have to work with and where to find things quickly. Place bookmarks or Post-It Notes on pages with important content so that you can access them quickly during play.

While you're skimming, identify and pay a bit more attention to the following key items:

1. Adventure background and overview
2. Maps for the DM and players
3. NPC and monster descriptions
4. Player handouts
5. Major encounters

Photocopy Materials

Make photocopies of player handouts, maps, and NPC and monster statistics blocks. Having photocopies of key materials such as these saves you time, helps you plan better, and lets you take as many notes as you like without marking up your book. Use colored paper for specific types of material: yellow for NPCs and monsters, white for maps, blue for rules and charts, and parchment paper or vellum for player handouts. This can help you find information quickly and easily during the game. The maps that come with most adventure are relatively small; magnifying them by 200% or more should give you enough room to jot down information about particular rooms or buildings in the area of the map that they occupy.

Map Orientation

You can learn a lot about the adventure in a short amount of time simply by studying the maps and their markings, so spend a few minutes after your initial scanning of the adventure to acquaint yourself with all aspects of the provided maps. Specifically, look for and note the following:

1. Is there a region map? How does this mesh with your world and campaign area?
2. Read all map titles, notes, and annotations. These often contain important information.
3. Read the legends and keys. Note any special symbols important to play and find them on the maps.
4. Read the names and say tricky ones out loud a few times to become familiar and comfortable with them before the game.
5. Determine the map's scale. Picture the size of landmarks and buildings, how far PCs might have to travel, and the approximate time it would take to travel these distances.
6. Determine the most likely routes the PCs might take. Give encounters along those routes a higher planning priority.
7. Visualize things from the characters' perspectives. Most maps have a bird's-eye view, so conjure up images of what the characters will see from their ground-level perspective.
8. If there are multiple areas and maps in the module, determine how the PCs will get from one area to another. For example, the module you are using has a map of the city and a map of the dungeon, but no map detailing the large forest the PCs must pass through on their way to the dungeon. If this is the case, be sure to plan some extra time to fill this hole.
9. Read the maps from a monster or villain's perspective to create clever tactics and strategies. Are there any bottlenecks where the monsters can trap the PCs? Where are the escape routes and good hiding places?

Study The Beginning And Ending

To savor the surprise of a good mystery novel, you'd generally avoid reading the last page until the end. If you were going to use that book as the

basis of an adventure, however, you'd want to read the last page first. Doing so would allow you to put the rest of the story into perspective, and it would help you both spot the clues more easily and follow the characters with better understanding.

The same is true with planning to run a published adventure. You've already quickly skimmed the entire adventure, now read its overview or synopsis and then its ending, including the climactic last battle. This gives you a big-picture view and helps you in your planning stage.

Prepare the Encounters

Once you have a good grasp of what happens in the adventure, it is important to focus on preparing the encounters in case you run out of planning time. For each encounter, follow the steps below.

1. Read the boxed text out loud. Being familiar with the details given in the boxed text, as well as names of people and places, means you won't trip up over any odd phrasing and that you'll be able to improvise should a player ask a question you didn't specifically plan for.

2. Carefully read all details of the encounter. Once you've done so, ask yourself: What is this encounter's purpose? What might the PCs do, and how should I react to their actions?

3. Make simple notes on your map photocopy. Don't be shy about marking up your copy of the map. For each encounter location, jot down relevant page numbers in the module for quick reference. Write the names of monsters or NPCs within the rooms or buildings they will be in at the time of the encounter. Consider color-coding maps with highlighters. Goblins might be green, orcs pink, locked doors blue, trapped doors yellow, and so on.

4. Make detailed encounter notes in your notebook or on the encounter description photocopy. For example, if the villain is of a particularly high level and has a number of different options and tactics available, it can be helpful to write down a few specific attacks, spells, or other tactics that you don't want to forget. Also, make a list of important things that successful Spot and Search checks will reveal, along with the required DCs.

5. Flesh out NPCs and monsters. The best place to start is with NPCs. The more you understand about an NPC, the better you'll be able to play that NPC, and this improves sessions on many levels. Read each NPC's description, spot any roleplaying deficiencies, and look for ways to improve tension, drama, and roleplaying possibilities. Don't forget about the monsters—they need fleshing out too.

Tweak Rewards

Appropriate reward levels vary by campaign, and published adventures generally stick to standard encounter level averages. You might find that this amount is too much or not enough for your group, so feel free to scale any rewards up or down to suit your game's balance.

Basic coin and gem rewards can be changed to valuable works of art, crafts, and antiques to add flavor to the adventure. This simple change can create interesting side adventures for PCs seeking buyers or information about their new possessions. Perhaps the PCs learn that the painting they've found depicts a character's relative long thought missing, or maybe it contains a clue to their current situation or reveals a secret ability of an upcoming monster.

Tie the Adventure Into Your Campaign

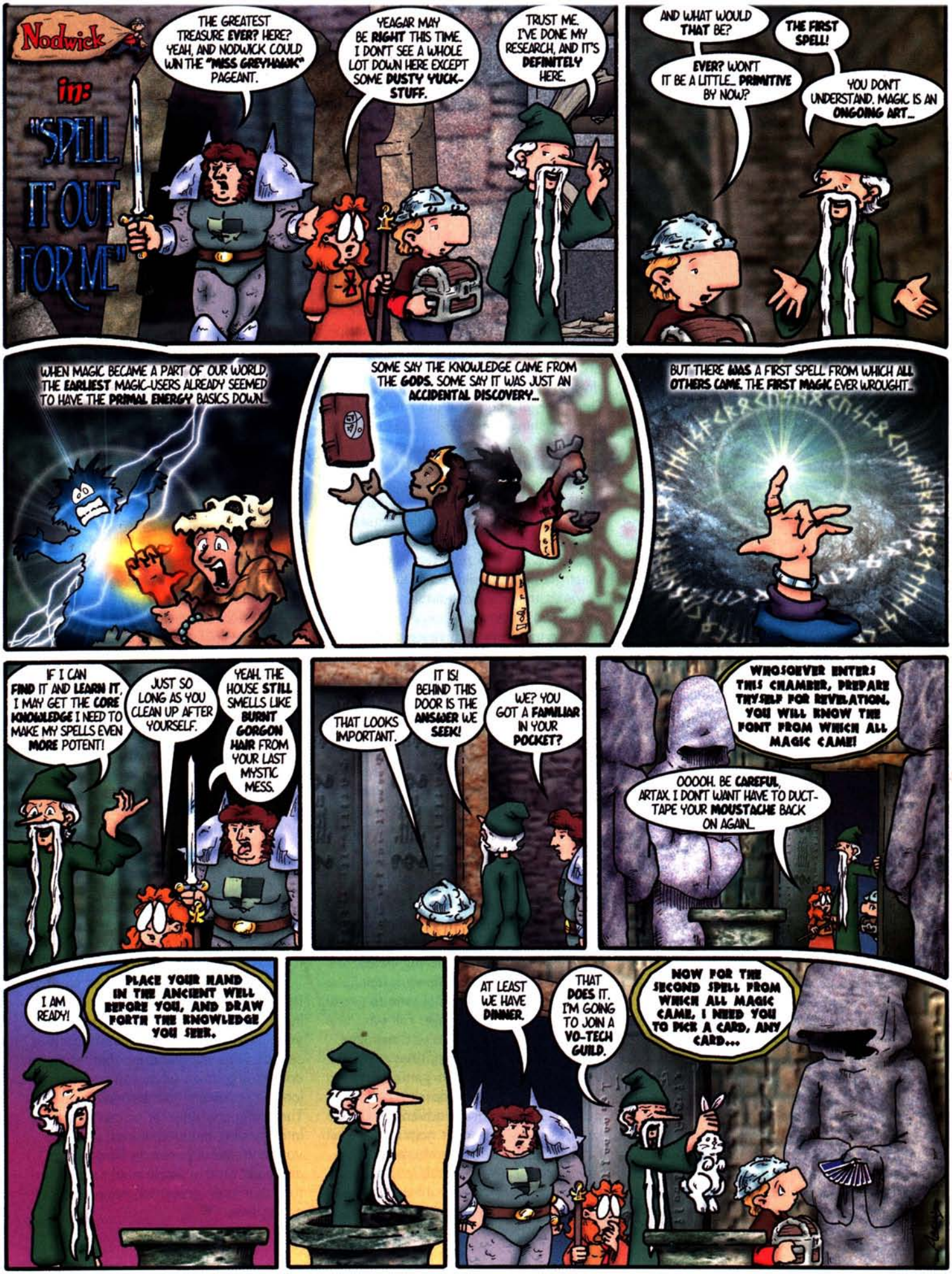
If you run an on-going campaign and you plan to integrate the published adventure into that campaign, it's worth spending additional time to ensure that the adventure fits into your campaign seamlessly. Consider changing names and identities of NPCs, villains, locations, and organizations to suit your campaign. Add clues and plant seeds for future adventures, such as hiding a secret map in the frame of a painting the characters salvage from the dungeon. Use some of the encounters in the published adventure as background events for future adventures. These are all ways that you can tailor a ready-made adventure to your own campaign.

By taking the time to prepare a published adventure before you run it for your players, you'll help ensure that the session runs smoothly and that the pace doesn't bog down while you spend time looking up things you don't remember. The designers put a lot of hard work into creating the adventures, and now you have the opportunity to capitalize and build on that work to run an adventure that your group will remember for a long time.

ENCOUNTER TWEAKING CHECKLIST

Use the list below as a checklist or as inspiration to help you think of new ways to enhance your encounters.

1. **Setting, Description, Environment**
   - Weather or lighting
   - Furnishings, contents
   - Terrain and footing (loose gravel, mosaic tiles, and so on)
   - Situation and props (dangling chains, monster trophies, and so on)
   - Atmosphere (light sources, sounds)
2. **NPCs and Monsters**
   - Flesh out personalities
   - Give them specific goals
   - Plan what they might say and do
   - Study their spells, feats, skills, abilities, and magic items
3. **Strategies and Tactics**
   - Set up for best offensive advantage
   - Set up scouts and sentries
   - Create an escape plan
   - Use cover and concealment
   - Add plausible traps and distractions
4. **Add Twists**
   - Red herrings and false rumors
   - Additional challenges or opponents
   - Illusion and deceptions
   - Extra details to distract PCs
   - Cursed magic items
5. **Miscellaneous**
   - Add clues
   - Create additional player handouts
   - Look for possible game props
   - Weave in background information
   - Link to individual PCs


Nodwick
in:
"SPELL IT OUT FOR ME"
THE GREATEST TREASURE EVER? HERE? YEAH, AND NODWICK COULD WIN THE "MISS GREYHAWK" PAGEANT.
YEAGAR MAY BE RIGHT THIS TIME. I DON'T SEE A WHOLE LOT DOWN HERE EXCEPT SOME DUSTY YUCK-STUFF.
TRUST ME. I'VE DONE MY RESEARCH, AND IT'S DEFINITELY HERE.
AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
EVER? WON'T IT BE A LITTLE... PRIMITIVE BY NOW?
THE FIRST SPELL!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. MAGIC IS AN ONGOING ART...
WHEN MAGIC BECAME A PART OF OUR WORLD, THE EARLIEST MAGIC-USERS ALREADY SEEMED TO HAVE THE PRIMAL ENERGY BASICS DOWN.
SOME SAY THE KNOWLEDGE CAME FROM THE GODS. SOME SAY IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY...
BUT THERE WAS A FIRST SPELL FROM WHICH ALL OTHERS CAME. THE FIRST MAGIC EVER WROUGHT...
IF I CAN FIND IT AND LEARN IT, I MAY GET THE CORE KNOWLEDGE I NEED TO MAKE MY SPELLS EVEN MORE POTENT!
JUST SO LONG AS YOU CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF.
YEAH. THE HOUSE STILL SMELLS LIKE BURNT GORGON HAIR FROM YOUR LAST MYSTIC MESS.
THAT LOOKS IMPORTANT.
IT IS! BEHIND THIS DOOR IS THE ANSWER WE SEEK!
WE? YOU GOT A FAMILIAR IN YOUR POCKET?
WHOSOEVER ENTERS THIS CHAMBER, PREPARE THYSELF FOR REVELATION. YOU WILL KNOW THE FONT FROM WHICH ALL MAGIC CAME!
OOOOH. BE CAREFUL, ARTAX. I DON'T WANT HAVE TO DUCT-TAPE YOUR MOUSTACHE BACK ON AGAIN...
I AM READY!
PLACE YOUR HAND IN THE ANCIENT WELL BEFORE YOU, AND DRAW FORTH THE KNOWLEDGE YOU SEEK.
AT LEAST WE HAVE DINNER.
THAT DOES IT. I'M GOING TO JOIN A VO-TECH GUILD.
NOW FOR THE SECOND SPELL FROM WHICH ALL MAGIC CAME. I NEED YOU TO PICK A CARD, ANY CARD...

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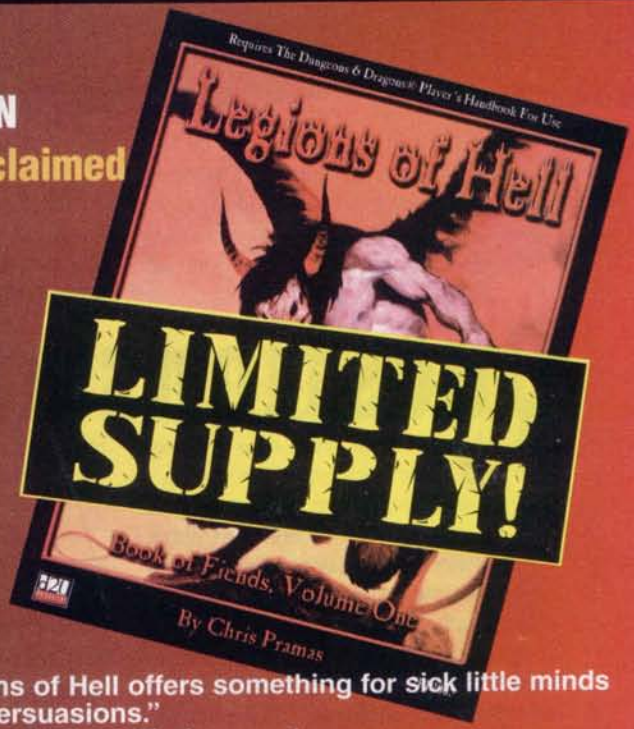
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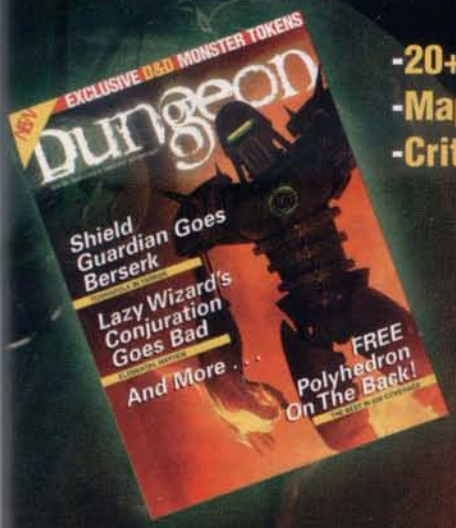
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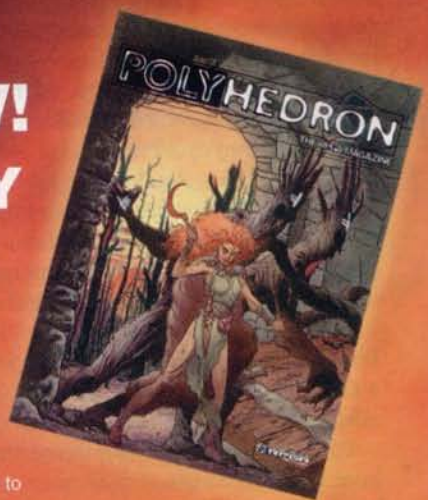

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Sage Advice

Questions and Answers

by Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers questions from the *Epic Level Handbook*.

Page 6 of the *Epic Level Handbook* says that your character's base attack bonus does not increase after your character reaches 20th level. The fastest base attack bonus progression I am aware of is +1 per class level (which fighters and similar martial characters get). Yet for certain epic prestige classes, such as the divine emissary on page 27, one of the prerequisites is a base attack bonus of +23. Am I missing something obvious here?

Your epic attack bonus improves your base attack bonus for all purposes except the number of attacks you can make in a round (see the next question).

The description for the Power Attack feat says you cannot exceed your base attack bonus when applying bonus damage. In an epic campaign, does your epic attack bonus apply for this condition? Also, does your epic attack bonus stack with your base attack bonus for feats like Improved Manyshot?

Yes. Your epic attack bonus increases your base attack bonus for purposes of the Power Attack feat, Improved Manyshot, and for most other purposes (see the previous question).

Does the Epic Prowess feat stack with a character's base attack, or is it simply a bonus to attack?

Epic Prowess provides an unnamed bonus to attack rolls. It does not increase your base attack bonus.

The feats Epic Weapon Focus and Epic Weapon Specialization grant a +2 to attack rolls and a +4 to damage rolls, respectively. Do these numbers stack with the regular Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization feats or do they overlap the original bonuses?

They stack (as all unnamed bonuses do, see the next three questions).

The feats Epic Fortitude, Epic Reflexes, and Epic Will don't state what sort of bonus they grant (inherent, competence, and so on) or whether or not they stack with Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, or Iron Will. Do these bonuses stack or not?

All the feats you've named provide unnamed bonuses, and therefore they all stack, but you can't take any of these feats twice. So, you can take Great Fortitude and Epic Fortitude and stack their effects, but you can't take Epic Fortitude twice to stack its bonus.

For feats with no listed bonus type, is there a default type for the bonus?

If no bonus is named, the feat provides an unnamed bonus. Note, however, that some feats might seem to provide a bonus, but actually do not (see the next question).

What kind of bonuses do the feats Great Strength, Great Constitution, Great Intelligence (and so on) provide? Do the feats grant an inherent bonus similar to that granted by a *wish* spell? Or is the bonus like the natural increase of an ability from gaining levels?

These feats don't provide bonuses, they merely increase your ability scores, just as the ability increase you get from your character level increases an ability score.

Can a character who has not reached epic levels achieve the results listed for an epic-level skill DC? For example, suppose my 10th-level wizard could achieve a Spellcraft result of 50 through some combination of ability bonuses and skill bonuses; could the character identify potions quickly?

Yes. Anyone who can manage a sufficiently high skill check result can get an "epic" result.

The Epic Dodge feat lists "defensive roll class feature" as one of its prerequisites. I have no idea what that means. Help!

Defensive roll is a class feature available to rogues of 10th level or higher—see the rogue class description in the *Player's Handbook* for a description of this ability. Several prestige classes also include this class feature.

The Listen and Spot skills have a DC 80 to automatically defeat illusions with auditory and visual aspects, respectively, without even needing to make a Will save. Is there some way to counter this automatic detect, or is the epic illusionist simply not viable?

If someone can see or hear, there's no way to keep that person from detecting a visible or audible illusion with a Spot or Listen check, just as there is no way to keep the person from making a Will save to accomplish the same thing. Of course, you could do something that interferes with Spot or Listen checks, such as create

magical darkness or silence; however, either of these methods could make your illusion useless.

A high-level illusionist could stick to phantasms (although one could argue that most phantasms have "visual" elements, phantasms are purely mental and cannot be defeated by Spot or Listen checks), use shadows (which are quasi-real and, like phantasms, cannot be defeated by Spot or Listen checks), or hope her foes can't make the required DC 80 Listen or Spot checks (hardly a vain hope).

I am a bit confused about the epic character rules regarding spells per day and base attack bonus. Suppose Reynard has 20 levels of fighter and then takes 20 levels of wizard, while his brother Meynard has 20 levels of wizard, and then takes 20 levels of fighter. Ignoring ability bonuses and such, how many spells per day could each cast and what would their base attack bonuses be? (Assume they both have an Intelligence high enough to cast 9th-level spells.)

Assuming neither character takes the Improved Spell Capacity feat and that both have the same Intelligence score, both example characters will have the same number of spells per day: 4 spells of each spell level 0-9, plus bonus spells for Intelligence. You don't get any extra spells for having 21 or more levels in a spellcasting class (see next question), but a multiclass character still gets all the spells to which he'd normally be entitled for class levels 1-20, no matter what his total character level is.

Your base attack bonus, however, is capped at whatever bonus you had when you reached character level 20. After character level 20, you only gain an epic attack bonus, no matter what class you take levels in. Reynard, the fighter/wizard, has a base attack bonus of +20 and an epic attack bonus of +10. When using the full-attack action, Reynard gets 4 attacks: +30/+25/+20/+15. His brother Meynard, the wizard/fighter, has a base attack bonus of +10 and an epic attack bonus of +10, and he gets 2 attacks with the full-attack action: +20/+15.

Once you reach caster level 20 in any spellcasting class, you no longer gain any spells per day without the appropriate feat, right? Does a wizard of level 21 or higher still learn two spells for every level gained even though she gets no additional spells to cast each day? What about other level-based benefits?

Yes to both. Once you reach 20th level in a spellcasting class, you no longer gain any more spells per day for that class. The Improved Spell Capacity feat, however, gives you more spells per day. No matter what spellcasting class you have, your caster level continues to increase as you add levels to that class beyond 20. As noted on pages 16-17 of the *Epic Level Handbook*, a wizard still gains two new spells to add to her spellbook at each level, and a wizard's familiar continues to improve. The wizard also gets 2 skill points (plus her Intelligence bonus) at each level beyond 20 and has save and attack bonuses as an epic-level character.

How do I choose feats for my multiclass, epic-level character? Suppose I have a character that is a 17th-level cleric/3rd-level fighter. At 21st level, I take my 4th level of fighter, and I get a fighter bonus feat. Is this bonus feat chosen from the list of basic bonus feats detailed in the *Player's Handbook* or from the epic-level fighter feats in the *Epic Level Handbook*, or can I choose from either one?

The example character gets a bonus feat for becoming a 4th-level fighter. That feat must be chosen from the fighter's list of basic bonus feats given in the *Player's Handbook*. To get an epic bonus feat, the class level that gives you the bonus feat must be an epic level (21 or higher).

As a 21st-level character, the example character also gets a regular feat, which can be a non-epic feat or an epic feat. To acquire regular epic feats the character level that gives you the feat must be an epic level (21 or higher). Note that the example character has an epic character level without having any epic class levels.

Suppose I reach 21st level in a spellcasting class (let's say wizard), and I choose Improved Spell Capacity as my epic feat. Is it true that I only get one 10th-level spell slot? How can I get an 11th-level spell slot? Do I have to choose Improved Spell Capacity again the next time I can pick up an epic feat?

When you take the Improved Spell Capacity feat, you choose any spell level up to one higher than the highest level of spell you can currently cast. If you add a new level of spell, you also gain any bonus spells to which you would normally be entitled. If the example character has an Intelligence score of 31 and chooses to add a 10th-level spell slot, she would have three 10th-level slots (one for the feat, plus two bonus 10th-level spells).

To get an 11th-level spell slot, the example character would have to take Improved Spell Capacity again. If the example character has an Intelligence score of 31, taking Improved Spell Capacity again would give the character only one 11th-level spell slot, because Intelligence 31 is not sufficient to get a bonus 11th-level spell (see Table 1–35 in the *Epic Level Handbook*).

Is it true that all my arcane spellcaster needs to cast epic healing spells (using the *heal* or *life* seeds) is to have the 24 ranks of Knowledge (religion)? Or do I also have to be a divine spellcaster?

It depends on how you're using the *heal* or *life* seed.

Most spells that use these two seeds are divine spells, which are not available to arcane spellcasters. Some spells that use these seeds, however, manipulate negative energy and are available as arcane spells (see the descriptions of the *heal* and *life* seeds for details). For example, you would have to be a divine spellcaster with the Epic Spellcasting feat to use the *Origin of Species: Achaierai* epic spell

because it uses the *life* seed and is not a negative energy spell.

Note that you must have the Epic Spellcasting feat before using any spell seed, and you must first develop an epic spell before you can cast it. Once you have the Epic Spellcasting feat, you can use almost any seed, except that the *heal* and *life* seeds are generally restricted to divine spellcasters.

To qualify as a divine caster you must be able to cast 9th-level divine spells and have 24 ranks of Knowledge (religion) or 24 ranks of Knowledge (nature).

As a divine spellcaster, what does a druid have to do to cast epic spells? How do you determine the number of epic spells a druid can cast each day?

A druid must have the Epic Spellcasting feat to cast epic spells, just as any other epic spellcaster must. It does not matter how the druid qualifies for the feat. As a divine spellcaster, the druid is limited to a number of epic spells per day equal to one-tenth his Knowledge (nature) ranks or one-tenth his Knowledge (religion) ranks, whichever is higher.

Our 27th-level bard has taken the Improved Spell Capacity feat four times, and now she wants to take the Epic Spellcasting feat. Can she do this? If so, will it do her any good?

If the character has an epic feat slot available and meets the prerequisites for Epic Spellcasting, she may take the feat. A bard who has taken the Improved Spell Capacity feat at least three times (and has a Charisma score of at least 19) can cast 9th-level spells and can qualify for the Epic Spellcasting feat. Once your bard has this feat, she can start developing and casting epic spells.

Other spellcasting characters, such as paladins and rangers, can qualify for the feat in the same manner, provided they take the Improved Spell Capacity feat enough times to enable them to cast 9th-level spells and that they have the necessary ability scores to cast 9th-level spells.

Many of the epic feats in the *Epic Level Handbook* have ability scores of 25+ as prerequisites. For example, the prerequisites for Epic Endurance are Constitution 25+ and Endurance. Is the Constitution prerequisite a base ability score, or can it be met with magic items? In other words, if a character has a Constitution score of 21, an *amulet of health +4*, and the Endurance feat, does that character meet the prerequisites for the Epic Endurance feat?

Yes. Always use your current ability score (no matter how you managed to get it) to determine if you qualify for any feat. Keep in mind that you cannot use a feat if you no longer meet the prerequisites (which might happen if you lose the item you're depending on to meet a prerequisite, as in your example).

Can you use the Automatic Quicken Spell feat on a spell you've already altered with a metamagic feat? For example, could you automatically quicken a silent *magic missile?*

Yes, but you must use the spell's higher metamagic level to determine if the spell is automatically quickened. Since Silent Spell adds only 1 level to the spell, you could automatically quicken a silent *magic missile* or any other spell of level 0, 1, or 2. Of course, you need to have the Silent Spell feat to do this, and the quickened, silent *magic missile* uses up a 2nd-level spell slot (just as any silent *magic missile* would).

When I'm creating an epic spell and I change the target to an area, what is the default area?

There isn't one. Pay +10 to go from a target to an area, then pay the cost for the area you select. For example, if you're using the *destroy* seed and you want the spell to have the area of a 40-foot cone, you would pay +12 (+10 to make a target an area, and +2 for the area).

It seems very easy to develop permanent epic spells and avoid any real cost for developing them just by piling up mitigating factors. It's true that there's a big multiplier for a permanent effect, but since you apply the multiplier last, you can mitigate the spell's DC down to nothing and still wind up with nothing after applying the multiplier. Is that correct? Also, is there a minimum DC for an epic spell, or can you really mitigate the DC down to nothing and thus avoid any time or expense for developing the spell?

When you see a multiplier on Table 2–2: Epic Spell Factors, you apply the multiplier last after adding up all the factors. You have to apply the multiplier before moving on to Table 2–3: Epic Spell Mitigating Factors. This makes it very difficult to reduce an epic spell's DC to nothing unless the spell is fairly weak as epic spells go.

There is no minimum DC for an epic spell; if you want to pile on the mitigating factors, you certainly can. Keep in mind, however, that epic spells work on a "pay-me-now-or-pay-me-later" basis. In other words, you might be able to avoid the time and cost involved in developing the spell, but you'll pay for the mitigating factors every time you cast the spell. A smart spellcaster stops applying mitigating factors when she gets the DCs down to 10 + her Spellcraft score. Any more than that is a waste unless the spell in question is something you won't cast very often.

If this bothers you, feel free to impose a minimum DC for an epic spell; DC 10 would be a good limit.

Can a magical trap be created with epic spells or spell seeds? If so, how would this affect Search or Disable Device checks?

You can't make a magic item that contains an epic spell, so you can't make a trap that contains one either. You could research an epic spell that functions as a trap (in the manner of a *glyph of warding* or a *symbol).* In the latter case, the DC for a Search or Disable Device check is 20 + the epic spell's caster level.

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The epic psion description in the *Epic Level Handbook* says that a psion's number of power points per day does not increase after 20th level. The very next sentence says that they instead get 34 power points per level. This seems contradictory. Could you clarify what these sentences are trying to say?

These lines are contradictory. An epic psion gains no more powerpoints from level advancement after 20th level, but the limit on power points spent on a metapsionic power is 19 (although feats such as Improved Manifestation can increase that). Each time the psion achieves a new level, he learns a new power of any power level that he can manifest (according to his new level) that is within his primary discipline. Also, the Improved Manifestation epic feat grants 19 power points when first taken. You can take Improved Manifestation multiple times, and each time you'll gain additional extra power points equal to the previous benefit, plus 2. For example, when you take Improved Manifestation a second time, you gain 21 extra power points, and if you take the feat a third time, you gain 23 extra power points, and so on. The psion continues to gain bonus power points for a high ability score.

Can a creature that only has spell-like abilities use the Spell Stowaway feat since they are mentioned specifically in the description?

Yes. Note that the Spell Stowaway feat functions whenever the effect you designate is used near you, and it doesn't have to be a spell. It can be a spell-like ability, supernatural ability, or spell effect from a magic item (so long as it duplicates the spell you named when taking the Spell Stowaway feat).

The demilich description in the *Epic Level Handbook* says that the entity has magic immunity, an extraordinary ability. The description of this ability says that the demilich is "immune to all magical and supernatural effects," and then proceeds to caveat that statement, allowing three magical effects to hinder or harm it. Not included in that list is any mention of demiliches being impeded by an *antimagic field.* If a demilich enters or is forced into an *antimagic field,* what happens? While it's safe to assume that any magical enhancements, spell casting ability, and supernatural effects the entity cast on itself would be suppressed while it is in the field, would the demilich itself be harmed? Would its natural attacks and mobility (fly, specifically) be compromised?

Although a demilich is not immune to antimagic, neither is it in any way vulnerable to antimagic; nothing special happens to the creature if it finds itself within an area of antimagic. The creature can still fly, and its attacks still work—except that the paralysis effect is supernatural and therefore suppressed.

In the demilich template description on page 175 of the *Epic Level Handbook,* it says that the creature has a flying speed of 180 feet (perfect) or the base lich's supernatural fly speed, whichever is greater. What is "greater?" Also, does this mean a demilich with a supernatural flying ability will be immobilized in an *antimagic field?*

Any demilich has a natural ability to fly at a speed of 180 feet, with perfect maneuverability. If the base lich had a supernatural flying ability, the demilich has that, too, and it can use either its supernatural flying ability or its natural ability. It will do so only when the supernatural flying ability allows it a higher speed, and even then it might choose to use its natural ability if its supernatural flight allows for less maneuverability. Should the demilich's supernatural flying ability ever be suppressed, it still can use its natural flying ability.

What sorts of tasks can an *unseen servant* do? Does it have any skills? Can it hold a curtain or rope rigid? Is there a limit to the number of objects the servant can carry?

In general, an *unseen servant* can do anything a human with a Strength score of 2 could do (but remember that it can move in three dimensions). The servant has no mind and no skills of its own. If left to operate on its own, it can perform very simple actions while holding a conversation (sweeping the floor, darning a sock, flipping the pages of a book, picking up objects, and so on).

The servant has no ability to make judgements when left to operate on its own. For example, if left alone after being directed to pick up objects, it cannot select specific objects to pick up, although it may be instructed to pick up objects of a certain size or weight. Thus, you could tell it to pick up all the Fine-sized objects the weight of a coin from the floor in a room, but you couldn't tell it to pick up all the coins and gems from the floor. The servant can pick up only coins or gems, but only if you direct the servant to each coin or gem. To do that you must see the coins or gems or know exactly where they are, and even then you must concentrate on the servant to have it perform so precisely.

A servant cannot perform any complex task, even if you concentrate on the servant. The servant cannot perform any task that requires a trained skill check or an untrained check with a difficulty level higher than 10.

Although the servant can hold anything that it is strong enough to lift, it can only hold rigid a flexible object up to 6 feet in length (such as a rope or curtain).

An unseen servant can carry any number of objects at once, so long as the total weight does not exceed its carrying capacity. The servant can only manipulate two of these objects at a time. For example, a servant could carry a broom, dustpan, mop, and bucket at once, but it could only use two of those at the same time.

See last month's "Sage Advice" for more answers to common questions about the *unseen servant* spell.

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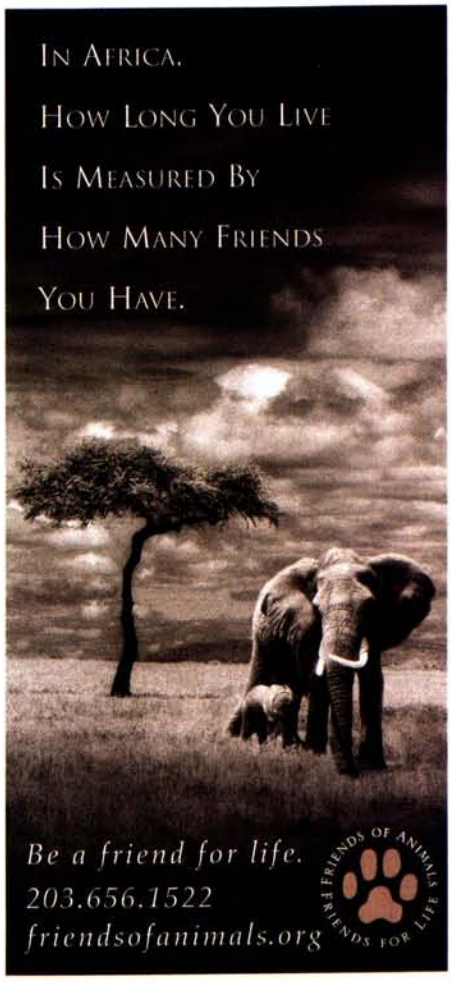

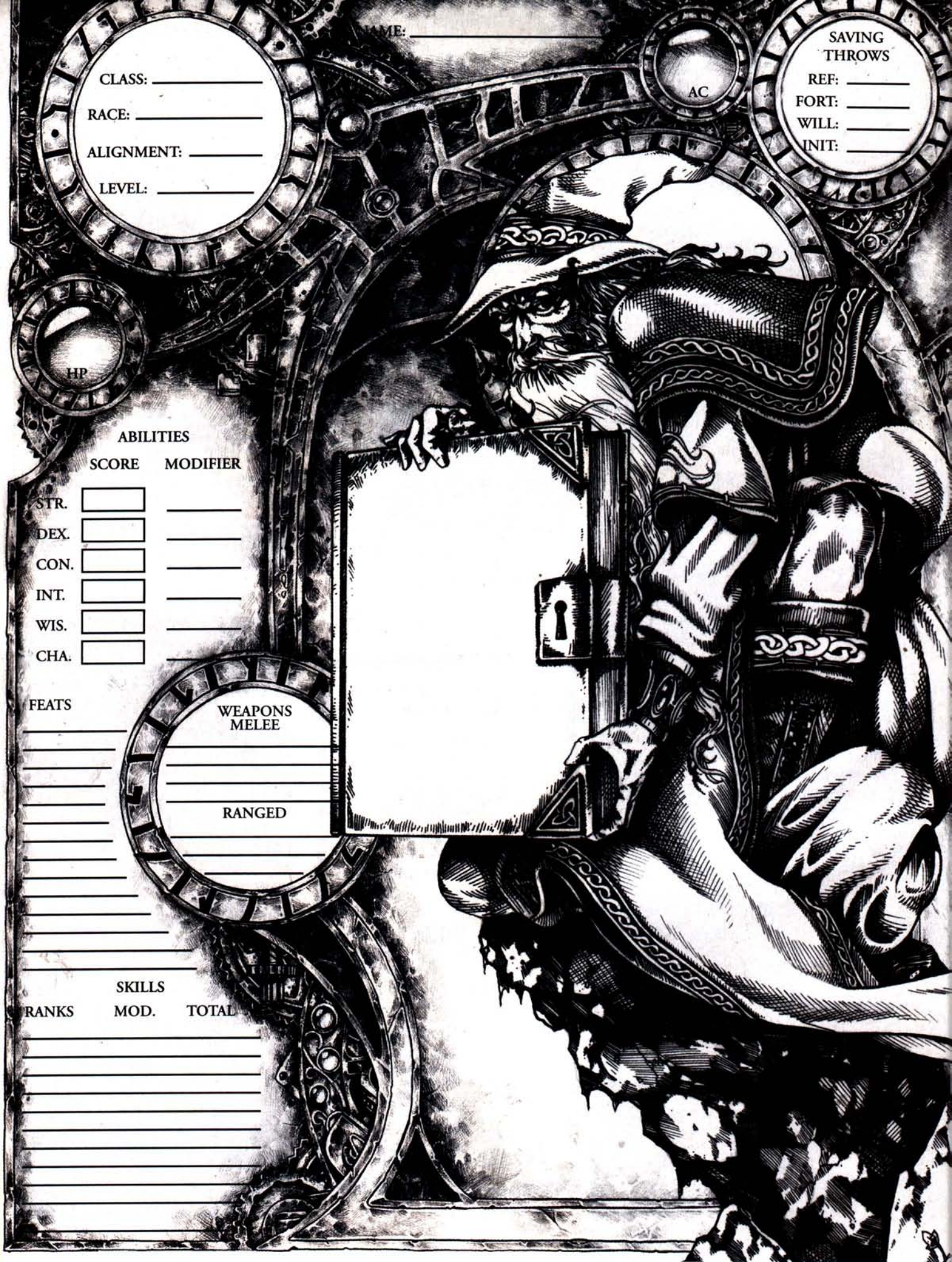

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